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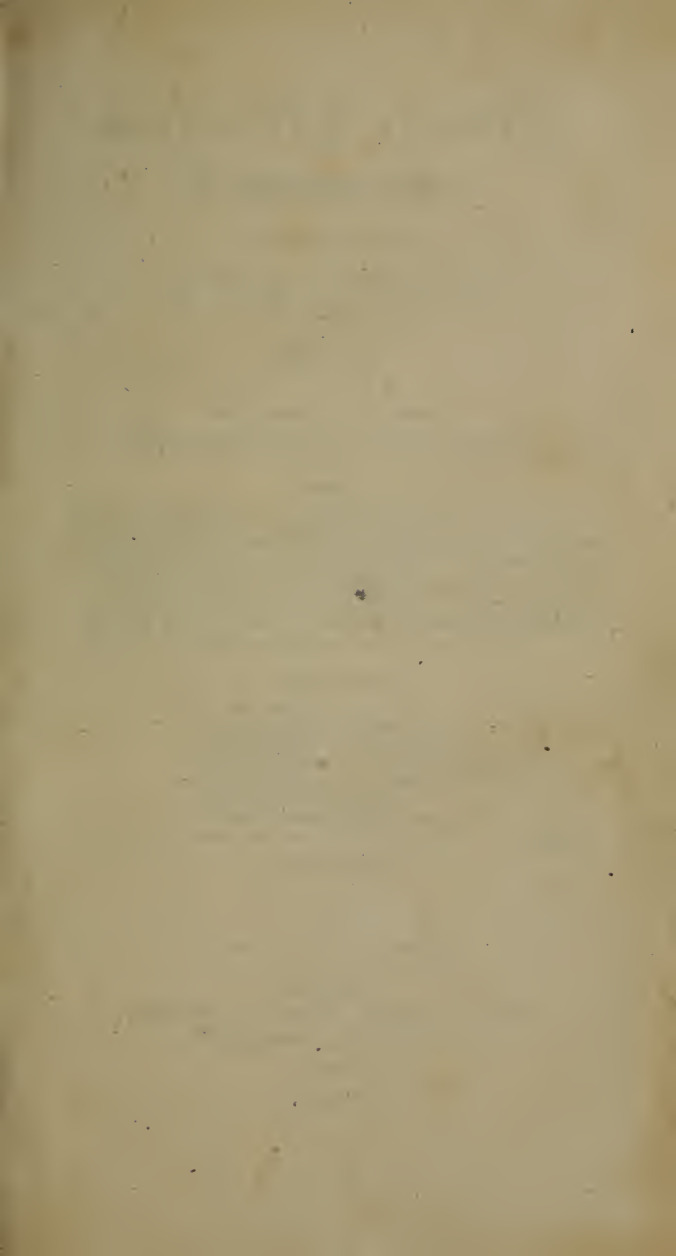
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WARWICK CASTLE,

An Historical Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By MISS PRICKETT.

DEDICATED

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE COUNTESS OF CLONMELL.

Containing, amongst other desultory Information, the Descent and Achievements of the Ancient Earls of Warwick, from the earliest Period of their Creation to the present Time. With some Account of Warwick, Birmingham, Lemmington, Kenilworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, &c. &c.; interspersed with Pieces of Local Poetry, Incidental Biography, and Authentic Anecdotes of English History.

“ I bring no ensigns of surprise:
Locks stiff with gore, and saucer eyes.
No spirits summon'd from the tomb
Glide glaring ghastly through the gloom,
In all the usual pomp of storms,
And horrid customary forms:
But with Decorum's needful grace,
Keep to the laws of time and place.”

CHURCHILL.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY,
47, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1815.

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TO

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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

COUNTESS OF CLONMELL.

MADAM,

IN presenting the following pages for your Ladyship's perusal, I have been actuated by motives of high personal respect.

To one so well acquainted with scenes to which my pen cannot possibly do justice, these volumes, "with all their imperfections on their head," will in some degree prove interesting, inasmuch as they may record, however imperfectly, the historical glories of your paternal home; and should they fortunately excite the flattering meed of approbation from her who

Crowns with fresh wreaths the British matron's fame,
And adds new honours to an honoured name,

I shall indeed be gratified.

PREFACE.

IN offering to the Public the following Volumes, the Author is well aware that much of the information which they contain may also be found elsewhere; but for the reader of deep research the work was not compiled, and an attentive perusal of the voluminous tracts from which it has been partly selected would be wholly incompatible with the limited leisure of the passing traveller, or the occasional half-hour

readings of the gayer visitant of Lemmington.*

Warwick Castle is a place of great historical interest, and although much may be found respecting its early possessors in the works of the more ancient writers, which however are but in the hands of few, little of it is very generally known, and the Author has long meditated a work which, concentrating whatever was interesting, and requiring little time in the perusal, might convey such information as, unless it were read in the shape of a

* This Work was completed three years since for publication, but circumstances then delayed it. Mr. Bisset has in the interim published a Lemmington Guide, which affords much historical and topographical information.

novel, would by many never be read at all.—This end, it is hoped, is here accomplished, though some objection may perhaps be urged against the introduction of a long historical narrative of facts and personages of real life in the middle of a fictitious tale; but the plan is not altogether without precedent.

In sketching the character of a soldier and a gentleman, the Author is sanguine enough to hope that she has in some measure succeeded, since the resplendent likeness of Montague exists; a Nobleman of distinguished worth, one of the brightest models of imitation for our Patrician youth, sat for the

picture.—May he long survive this faint memorial of his virtues!

The heroine of the work, it is hoped for the honour of her sex, is a common character; she has endeavoured to portray her as what, in her judgment, British wives and British daughters *ought* to be; and, notwithstanding the licentious gallantry which now stains the page of domestic history, as what numbers of her fair countrywomen most indubitably *are*.

It is possible that the account of the achievements and high employments of the ancient Earls of Warwick may be considered somewhat too prolix; but reared and resident for years upon the

spot where these great men have lived and died, she feels a sort of veneration for their departed glories; and almost considers herself as doing injustice to their memory, by the necessary suppression of such parts of their history as are foreign to the present Work. Should it however be deemed, “A chronicle of day by day; a relation not fit for a breakfast, or befitting this *first* meeting;” all similar attempts for the future are at an end, and the Author is content to pursue in silence the “noiseless tenour of her way.”

WARWICK CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

LADY MONTAGUE TO THE HONOURABLE
MRS. FORTESCUE, AT MADRAS.

Park Lodge, July 1807.

THE crisis that has decided my fate is past, and you will see, my dear Maria, by the contents of this voluminous packet, that my marriage with Lord Montague has at length taken place; but surely at a time, and attended with circumstances, under which no woman but myself, I think, ever yet became a bride! My friends however acquit me of the slightest shadow of impropriety, although the busy world yet sits in judgment on my

conduct. With regard to its decision, I feel perfectly at ease ; and, satisfied with the unqualified approbation of my family connexions, to the opinion of strangers I avow myself indifferent. Particular and painful circumstances, which I shall explain hereafter, have rendered it necessary for us to retire for the present from public observation, but wrapped in the calm dignity of conscious rectitude, I patiently await the welcome moment which shall restore me to society, graced with the enviable distinction of which I now more than ever feel the inestimable value.

Nearly twelve months are yet wanting of the period originally fixed upon for our marriage, but an imperious necessity unavoidably shortened the term. My mother, on her death-bed, solemnly consigned me to the protection of Lord Montague, should circumstances, which as she truly foreboded proved to be the case, render our earlier union expedient ;

and the conduct of my father, since Lord Rathfarnham's official residence at St. Petersburg, has been such as justified the very worst of her apprehensions, and compelled me to accept it at all risks of inconvenience, and even in defiance of its alleged impropriety. Had Lady Rathfarnham passed the period of my brother's absence in Ireland as she at first intended, the extreme awkwardness of our marriage being concluded before Montague was at liberty to form a suitable establishment for it, might possibly have been avoided, for I should then have passed the interval with her upon the Irish estate; but she had already quitted this country in consequence of a new arrangement, and I should suppose that long before this you must have received the letters which were transmitted to you on their departure for Russia, where they are still resident, and from which, I believe, Lord Rathfarnham is not yet likely to return.

Montague has written, by the last dispatches, to apprize him of the change which has taken place in our affairs, accompanied by a long detail of the unpleasant circumstances which led to it.

This information will not astonish, or even surprise him, although *you*, who are less acquainted with Lord Carloraine's real character, would scarcely believe him capable of the depravity which at last drove me for ever from my paternal home. And as I am well convinced that both you and Fortescue, notwithstanding our immense distance, will feel deeply interested in the particulars, I shall, at my leisure, narrate them for your perusal; although some of them are of a nature to which you would scarcely deem it possible for me to have been exposed;—for instance, amidst all the varieties of fate, and all the vicissitudes of fortune, could it ever have occurred to you that *I*, born in a rank so distinguished, and placed amongst con-

nexions so illustrious—the wife of a British Peer, and the sister of a British Ambassador, should at this moment be literally wandering about my native country, sheltered under the disguise of a fictitious appellation, and shunning almost the light of heaven, lest it should betray the interesting companion of my present painful seclusion? Such however, incredible as it may appear, is at this juncture my actual situation! But, to enable you to enter into my feelings upon this subject, I shall relate to you some particulars which, having principally occurred before your marriage with Fortescue, you can be but imperfectly, even if at all, acquainted with.

My mother, the late Countess of Rathfarnham and Carloraine, the orphan heiress of an ancient and honourable Irish house, and a Peeress in her own right, having succeeded to that honour whilst an infant, on the death of her only brother, was married at an early age to the

younger brother of a nobleman of high respectability in her native country ; of which marriage, Lord Rathfarnham, and Fortescue, are the only surviving issue. Their father, an officer in the army, lost his life at an early period in an engagement, during the American war ; leaving his elder brother, Lord Fitzmaurice, and the present Earl of Carloline, executors of his will, and guardians of his two boys ; the eldest, then, in right of his mother, Viscount Clencorrie, about ten years of age ; and Fortescue, the other, a few years younger.

As long as the education of her sons would permit her to do it with propriety, Lady Rathfarnham resided upon her Irish estate ; for, partially attached to a country where the happiest years of her life had been spent, she had not hitherto felt a wish to change her residence, although she was possessed of another beautiful seat in Devonshire. Wholly wrapped up in her children, she had not

yet found the solitude irksome, to which, on the death of their father, she had devoted herself; or once given a sigh to the remembrance of metropolitan splendour, in which, previous to her early widowhood, she had moved with distinguished *eclat*.

The death of her brother-in-law, in a few years, placing the guardianship of her sons wholly in the hands of Lord Carloraine, the welfare of her children, which his Lordship assured her would be materially benefited by their immediate removal to a public school, once more lured her from her retreat at Clencorrie; and, wrought upon by his representation of its general convenience, she at length quitted Ireland, and fixed her residence in England.

The Earl of Carloraine had been the early friend of her deceased husband; and anxiously interested as he now appeared for the boys, you, who so many years afterwards admired his fine person

and imposing manners, may form some idea of the impression he was then capable of making upon an inexperienced heart, when he chose to exert his talents with effect, and will probably acquit Lady Rathfarnham of imprudence, when, after an interval of five years from the death of Captain Fortescue, she gave her hand in second marriage to Lord Carloraine: a step which she afterwards most bitterly repented!

At this period Lord Clencorrie was nearly fifteen, and Fortescue about ten years of age.—They were then educating at Westminster school, but occasionally receiving the benefit of private instruction from Dr. Grey, a clergyman of a most cultivated mind; who, having been for years the domestic chaplain of Lady Rathfarnham, had accompanied her family to England, and was now settled upon a living to which he had some years before been presented by his munificent patroness, near her seat in De-

vonshire, at which place his pupils usually passed the summer.

These boys disliked Lord Carloraine exceedingly : the tiresome and unnecessary restraints to which his Lordship's new code of regulations subjected them, after their arrival in England, and to which they had experienced nothing similar under the mild influence of Dr. Grey, soon rendered him an object of their inveterate dislike ; whilst the haughty indifference which he affected towards them as mere school-boys, daily and almost hourly increased their disgust. Clencorrie, in particular, associated from infancy in most of his mother's schemes of happiness, could not patiently endure the strict discipline imposed upon him ; and, indignantly resenting the epithet of "*Irish cubs*," which Lord Carloraine had upon some previous occasion contemptuously applied to them, they expressed their disapprobation of her marriage with a man to whom, of all others,

they felt the strongest antipathy, in terms little likely to conciliate their new father-in-law's regard. Accustomed to speak his sentiments upon all occasions without reserve, Lord Clencorrie, who even at that early age possessed an understanding far superior to his years, could with difficulty suppress his aversion to Lord Carloraine; though, as the husband of his mother, he strove to conquer his feelings, and compelled himself to treat him with some appearance of respect. He well remembered his own father, and incessantly contrasting the high-souled liberality of his nature, the national characteristic of his native country, with the cold and specious elegance of Lord Carloraine's courtly manners, he invariably regarded him with distrust and dislike.

Lady Carloraine, deeply hurt by their evident disapprobation of her new alliance, vainly endeavoured to abate the coldness which she soon perceived ex-

isted between her husband and her sons : in vain she shaded his faults from their ready observation, and carefully concealing the selfish traits which she herself hourly discovered in his character, she laboured to impress them with a belief that he was anxiously interested in their welfare. But her efforts were unavailing ; and, much as she strove to disguise it, the boys soon perceived that their mother was unhappy, and saw, or at least fancied they saw, that *self* was the sole and darling object of Lord Carloraine's solicitude ; and though time wore away, they still grew up with sentiments of increasing aversion to him.

A year after her marriage, Lady Carloraine again became the mother of a son, who died however before he had completed his first year, and thus disappointed the expectations of his father, upon whose eldest male heir a considerable property had been entailed by a deceased relative of the family. The

Earl, if he was ever capable of feeling affection for any human being besides himself, certainly did feel it for this darling boy, for he wept over the corpse of the lifeless infant in all the bitterness of sorrow, and deplored his loss with the keenest feelings of regret. I was born the next year, but my father, who had looked anxiously forward to the birth of another son, saw me with an indifference which, I am tempted to believe, was never afterwards removed. Lady Carloraine received me as the choicest gift of Heaven! although she had, in this instance, been desirous of another boy, whose birth might gratify the ambitious wishes of her mercenary husband, she herself ardently longed for a daughter, in whom she might find a companion for her solitary hours, and, at some distant period, form into a friend.

Lord Carloraine, whose extravagance, as far as related to his own gratification, was unbounded, and whose habits of

high play frequently led into inconveniences of the most serious nature, had latterly passed most of his leisure hours abroad. The rank and beauty of my mother, added to the admiration which she every where excited, had gratified his vanity in the early days of their union; but when these transient triumphs had subsided, and the liberal resources which her partiality had supplied him with were exhausted, Lady Carloraine gave place to more lucrative association; his nights became invariably devoted to the gaming table, and his days passed in society, to which *her* doors were closed. Lord Carloraine was in fact the “*gay Lothario*” of his time, a general favourite amongst the women: he was the idol of the circles where he chose his talents should shine forth, though little better than a moody tyrant in his own house, which he now rarely visited but for the purposes of an hotel.

As I began to grow up with sense

enough to make my observations upon the glaring impropriety of his conduct, unsparingly communicated by the voice of public report, I wept over the sufferings I wanted power to alleviate, and shared in the sorrows of my deeply wounded mother. Lady Carloraine, painfully as she was aware that she was not only neglected, but literally despised, by the very being who, as long as he could drain her purse, seemed to exist but in her smiles, still confined her anguish to her own gentle bosom. The dereliction of her husband sunk deeply into her heart; but considering it as a prohibited subject between us, she lamented it in silence, nor ever uttered a complaint that might injure him in the estimation of his child. His conduct, reprehensible as it was now become, she attempted not to palliate; but, abstaining from all comment upon his behaviour, she pined in secret over the deception she had so cruelly endured.

My brothers were then nearly grown up into manhood, and being accustomed to receive daily marks of their tenderest affection, it was no wonder that I contemplated them as the first and best of human beings. Lord Clencorrie, who being much older was less of a play-fellow to me than Fortescue, frequently fondled me for hours upon his knee, whilst he conversed with my mother upon his future views in life.—He was nearly one and twenty—many years my senior—and, accustomed to hear nothing but kindness from his lips, I looked up to him for the affection which my father seemed to deny me. It had been settled, during the last year of his minority, that as soon as he was of age he should leave England to make the usual tour of the Continent, accompanied by Fortescue, and under the conduct of Dr. Grey; and to this parting Lady Caroline looked forward with much uneasiness. It was the first time that she had

been entirely separated from her sons; and though her judgment acceded to the propriety of the measure, the mother's heart throbbed with terror, at the bare idea of distant danger. Lord Clencorrie strove to dissipate these maternal apprehensions; and, to alleviate, in some degree, her regret at their separation, he proposed that she should accompany them to Ireland, which she had never visited since her marriage with Lord Carloraine, and pass a few weeks with them at Clencorrie, when he went over to take possession of his estates, and make himself personally known to his tenantry before his departure for the Continent. Lady Carloraine, much as she desired to gratify herself with this indulgence, so natural to a mother's feelings, scarcely dared venture to decide upon accompanying them; for, added to the prospect of soon losing their society, she had lately experienced the mortification of an open rupture between her

husband and her sons. Lord Carloraine, in consequence of his boundless extravagance at the hazard table, had frequently lost sums of incredible amount; and having misapplied some very considerable ones which had been raised from the rents, and intended by Lord Clencorrie for the particular expenditure of improvements on the Irish estate, he had been under the necessity of partly acknowledging the real cause of the deficiency in his guardianship accounts; though he artfully concealed the darkest shades of the transaction, and glossed over the rest in a way that redounded but little to his honour. Lord Clencorrie, however, was not to be so easily imposed upon: with a judgment beyond his years, and matured by the polish of superior education, he readily saw through the flimsy subterfuges of the Earl; and, disgusted at the discovery of principles which, much as he disliked him, he had not hitherto imputed to him, irritated too

by his vain attempts to blind him by his plausibility, he expressed his disapprobation of his conduct in the most spirited terms, and warmly avowed his determination never to sanction excesses which might ultimately expose his mother to inconvenience or disgrace.

Much high language passed between them on this occasion, and the ill opinion which Lord Clencorrie had previously entertained of his father-in-law was considerably increased by this unpleasant altercation. He now regarded him with a suspicion which he had never felt before, and examined the accounts of his disbursements, during his guardianship, with a minuteness and precision that only served to add to their mutual aversion.

The landed property of Lady Caroline, both in England and in Ireland, had been originally placed in settlement on the heirs of her former marriage ; the Earl had consequently no claim upon the

estates, although her personal property, which had been very considerable, had long since been dissipated by his extravagance. The rents of the Devonshire estate, settled in jointure upon Lady Carloraine, and upon her second marriage retained for her private expenditure, he generally contrived to obtain upon some pretence or other, and amidst the multiplicity of claims to which his necessities gave birth, she had frequently nothing left for her personal expenses. Lord Clencorrie feeling the painful delicacy of her situation, upon the day on which he became of age, presented her with a deed of gift for ten thousand pounds, with power to dispose of it in any way she might think proper hereafter, but under the conditional proviso, that no part of it ever passed into the hands of Lord Carloraine.

On the day following he departed for Clencorrie, accompanied by his solicitor, and his worthy preceptor Dr. Grey,

leaving Fortescue to attend his mother to Ireland, where Lady Carloraine had finally agreed to join him in the ensuing month.

We had celebrated Lord Clencorrie's birth-day with great festivity in Devonshire—the Earl, notwithstanding Lady Carloraine's earnest request (for, anxious to restore unanimity, she had, contrary to her son's desire, persisted in inviting him to the fête), sullenly remaining in town, under the influence of sensations that left him but little inclination to rejoice at a circumstance which deprived him of the disposition of a princely income, and afforded him no future opportunity of gratifying his extravagance at Lord Clencorrie's expense.

My mother, accompanied by Fortescue and myself, shortly afterwards returned to town, and, on announcing her intention of passing a few weeks in Ireland with her sons, the Earl coolly but decidedly prohibited the execution of her

plan. Astonished—thunderstruck, at a conduct in which no motive but a desire to thwart her could be traced, and for which he chose to assign no cause but his sovereign pleasure, my mother was at first prompted to give up her design; but warmly urged by Fortescue, who indignantly reminded her that her promise had been given to Clencorrie, at whose earnest desire the visit had been agreed on, Lady Carloraine, at length roused into the exertion of her slumbering spirit, signified her determination to fulfil her promise to her son, and on the succeeding day commenced her journey to Ireland.

CHAPTER II.

“ O sad is my fate, said the heart-broken stranger,
The wild deer and wolf to a covert can flee,
But I have no refuge from insult and danger,
A home and a country remain not for me!
But yet all its fond recollections suppressing,
One dying wish my fond bosom shall draw,
Erin! an exile bequeaths thee a blessing—
Land of my forefathers! Erin go Bragh!

YOUNG as I was at the period of our Connaught visit, the early impressions of simple grandeur made upon my mind by the wild and magnificent scenery of the western coast of Ireland are yet lively in my imagination.

Delightful scenes! where oft, a sportive child,
I roved in thoughtless ease your shades among,
Made the shores vibrate with my carols wild,
And woke responsive echo with my song!

After an interesting stay at Clencorrie, prolonged somewhat beyond her original intention by the solicitation of her sons,

Lady Carloraine bade a reluctant adieu to this favoured scene of early happiness, and with her children departed for England, breathing many a painful sigh to the memory of hours fled for ever. The darling of my indulgent parent, and the humoured pet of both my brothers, by whom my caprices were all tolerated, and my childish follies only encouraged, I felt the strongest emotions of infant sorrow at leaving Ireland; and, exceedingly indignant at being carried, maugre all my struggling, on board the vessel destined to convey us to England, I wept most vociferously as we receded from the Irish shore.

My brothers were to remain a week in London, while Dr. Grey returned into Devonshire to settle some business relative to the discharge of his ecclesiastical duties; but, fixed in their determination never again to inhabit a roof of which Lord Carloraine was the proprietor, they took up their abode at an hotel for the

short time they were to stay in London, nevertheless continuing their daily visits to their mother in Grosvenor Square. Lord Carloraine received us upon our return with his usual cold civility; he was more than commonly engaged abroad, and as he abstained from all remarks upon our excursion to Clencorrie, Lady Carloraine herself wisely forebore to revive the subject. It was now the middle of May, and though the usual time of our leaving London for the summer was fast approaching, my mother prolonged her stay in the metropolis, for the purpose of meeting there an old and valued friend, who, having been absent for some years upon a foreign station with her husband, an officer of high rank in the army, was recently returned to her native country; and this lady she hoped to prevail upon to accompany us into Devonshire. My brothers, during this interval, were busily engaged in preparations for their departure, though all

their leisure hours were given to their mother ; but Dr. Grey having settled his affairs in the country again returned to town, and every arrangement being completed, they at length took an affectionate leave of Lady Carloraine, and set out for Paris, from whence they were to proceed at their convenience to Rome.

They had no sooner quitted England, than the smothered storm burst on our heads : their proximity had hitherto stifled the resentment of Lord Carloraine ; but, sheltered no longer under the protection of her sons, his passion broke forth, and now raged with double fury against their unoffending mother. He accused Lady Carloraine of combining with them to vilify his honour, of inciting her sons to open rebellion against his authority during his guardianship, and, finally, of joining them in a conspiracy to degrade him in the estimation of the world, by promulgating suspicions of his honour and veracity. My mother

most strenuously denied this bitter charge; she asserted her total innocence of the whole fabrication, and pleaded her known anxiety to conciliate their warring passions. In vain she urged her unavailing efforts of mediation: the never to be forgiven Irish expedition rose in judgment against her; and, after a series of insult, to which she could no longer submit with her usual patience, she indignantly exerted the independence of her mind, and quitted London with a firm determination never to return to it, till the conduct of Lord Carloline should be materially changed.

For some months she steadily persevered in her resolution, until the Earl, deeply involved by his increased habits of dissipation, began to feel the want of Lord Clencorrie's ample rent-roll, and aware that the product of his wife's jointure estate would probably be now withheld from him, he thought it prudent to conciliate her by an appearance of con-

trition. Lady Carloraine was not deceived by the concessions of the crafty Earl; but, still willing to believe that he felt what he professed, she lent a favourable ear to his overtures of reconciliation; and, after a separation of twelve months, once more revisited London. But this amnesty lasted not long: Lady Carloraine's resources were as usual soon exhausted, and her purse not unfrequently drained of its solitary guinea; and as I began now to grow up to an age that required more instruction than her broken spirits could afford me, this consideration occupied her reflection, and she felt the necessity of acting with more decision. Reared under the eye of this inestimable parent, at fifteen I was tolerably mistress of the usual accomplishments of my station; for in Devonshire, where we always passed the summer, our leisure was but little interrupted by company; and in London the winter was invariably devoted to the ac-

quisition of such knowledge, as our distance from town precluded at other seasons.—To the increased expenses of my education, Lord Carloraine did not appear to have given a single thought: if my mother in their accidental interviews ever led to this topic, he politely professed to leave the sole direction of it to her, and instantly dismissed the subject without allowing her to proceed. He affected neither leisure or ability to form a judgment on such affairs; and the approbation of a father never once stimulated the exertion of my talents.

About this time the Earl had obtained a lucrative post under government, which occasionally *did* occupy some portion of his time; but the profits of which, added to his former annual income, being scarcely adequate to his personal expenditure, he felt little inclination to curtail it for that of his daughter.

About this period too Lady Carloraine's health began visibly to decline.

Her constitution, naturally delicate, had been severely shaken by the harassed state of her mind, and she was slowly recovering from a severe indisposition, when, after an absence of five years, Lord Clencorrie, and Fortescue, having met your family at Florence, accompanied them back to England.

I need not here recapitulate the circumstances attending Fortescue's subsequent appointment to his present post in India, or your marriage, and consequent departure with him for Madras, but pass on to that of Lord Clencorrie, who, several years after his return from the continent, married the eldest daughter of the late Earl of Northallerton, a nobleman at that period of high ministerial influence. The splendid connexion he had thus formed, added to the numerous alliances of his mother's ancient family, the brilliancy of his political talents, and the weight of solid knowledge which he indubitably possessed, soon gave him

a consequence in society but rarely attained at such an early period of life; and before he had reached his thirtieth year, Lord Clencorrie found himself looked up to as a leading member of the administration. Lady Clencorrie, now Countess of Rathfarnham, you have since become acquainted with, and from her present appearance you may form some idea of her charms in early youth. She has since been the mother of a large and lovely family; but at the period of her marriage she was the most beautiful creature I had ever beheld.

Lord Clencorrie, with his usual affectionate consideration, made a point of my participating in their nuptial festivities, and having, at my mother's request, addressed a civil letter to Lord Carlouraine, in common with the rest of his connexions, to announce his intended marriage, the Earl did not withhold the permission, which Lord Clencorrie had flattered his consequence by soliciting,

and I consequently accompanied the bridal party to Ireland in a style of splendour suited to the occasion.

The gaieties of this visit surpassed my wildest expectations. Totally secluded in Devonshire, and but rarely indulged in the amusements of a London winter, it seemed as if I had literally become the inhabitant of another world. From the peer to the simple cotter all was animation and delight; and the castle at Clencorrie was the brilliant scene of our enjoyments. Lord Clencorrie was highly national; the alliances of his family by intermarriages were numerous; and a marking spirit of hospitality opened his doors to the neighbouring gentry. Balls, breakfasts, and dinner parties, succeeded without cessation; and while the interior of his ample mansion rang with the festive strains of the native harper, the peasantry roared around us in the drunken transports of Irish jollity.

After the bustle incidental to this

event had subsided, late in the summer we returned to England, and the new-married pair passed the autumn with us in Devonshire. A brilliant winter in the British metropolis succeeded, where Lady Clencorrie shone forth a conspicuous leader of haut-ton; but at this period my mother wisely judged me too young to participate in its amusements, and my time was as before devoted to instruction. During the whole of this winter we saw but little of Lord Carloraine. He was scarcely ever at home; and, if there, never accessible to my mother or myself, except we sometimes met by accident on the staircase, when his habitual indifference invariably marked his manners.

Although Lady Carloraine, when in London, still resided under his roof, she had entirely given up the regulation of his household. A separate suite of apartments had been appropriated to her use; and as she had long ceased to preside

over the Earl's table, she saw her private circle of acquaintance without any interference in his domestic concerns ; but at these sober parties his Lordship never appeared. The payment of her own regular set of servants, with the increasing expenses of my dress and education, were solely defrayed from her private purse, and these additional disbursements naturally left her without the means of affording Lord Carloraine the occasional supplies which he still expected. Her absolute inability to satisfy his demands soon produced a renewal of their former differences ; and my mother, wearied by these disputes, and worn down by illness and mental sufferings, at length determined to put an end to such fruitless altercation, and under the advice of Lord Clencorrie she wrote a long explanatory letter to the Earl, in which she unequivocally declared her comparative poverty, and avowed her resolution of lessening her expenses in every possible shape, upon my account,

by retiring wholly into Devonshire, except for three months in the year, which it was absolutely requisite I should pass in town, and her consequent intention of retaining in her own hands, for the future, the sole product of her jointure rents. To this arrangement, however secretly he disapproved it, the Earl could not object ; for it was also stated to him in a personal interview by Lord Clencorrie, and had previously received the approbation of such of her family as she had chosen to consult.

The business therefore was soon settled ; and Lady Carloraine, delighted with her emancipation, quitted London without regret. Ill health had long made the calmer scenes of the country more congenial to her harassed mind, and the valued society of the few friends who occasionally enlivened our solitude served to render it more interesting.

Lady Clencorrie, who had recently become the mother of a beautiful boy,

passed most of the first summer with us ; but as her Lord, from being much in public life, had been newly appointed to a diplomatic situation abroad, she left us in the autumn to accompany him to Vienna, where they resided for several years. Lord Carloraine did not once honour our distant abode with a visit ; and the only connexion which he now maintained with us arose from the correspondence Lady Carloraine made a point of my still keeping up with him. However reprehensible his conduct might have been to *her*, she was still anxious that he should feel like a parent towards *me* ; and under the influence of this desire she carefully exacted the performance of every duty, the principles of which she had perseveringly inculcated in my mind. In pursuance of this wish, I regularly transmitted to his Lordship the particulars of my attainments, accompanied by occasional solicitations for his direction of my studies. Sometimes

he did condescend to notice my letters, sometimes he did not, but his short and hurried answers were all composed in the same strain. “He was always busy, most excessively busy, but vastly happy to congratulate me on the progress of my improvement; exceedingly anxious for my welfare, but perfectly satisfied with Lady Carloraine’s superintendence of it, and then with a polite hope for her Ladyship’s better health, and a civil request to know if he could have the pleasure of doing any thing for me in town, his Lordship professed himself my most anxious, most gratified, and most affectionate, &c. &c. &c.” Once, in the pride of my heart at this condescension, and emboldened somewhat by the affectionate “anxiety” he expressed, I did venture to put his sincerity to the proof; for having accidentally broken a favourite globe, which I could not replace with one of equal value in the country, I respectfully solicited the Earl to pro-

cure me one: but as in the multiplicity of his engagements he could not find time even to notice my request, it effectually precluded me from again taxing his politeness; and convinced by this incident, trifling as it seemed, of the little reliance to be placed upon his courtly professions, I deemed it fruitless to repeat my applications, though I still regularly continued my monthly gazette of information.

CHAPTER III.

AT this period I was nearly eighteen, and having been for years almost the only companion of my sorrowing mother, I had acquired a solidity of mind, tinctured by habits of reflection, somewhat unusual at such an early age. Lady Carloraine, from her frequent indisposition, looking forward with pain to the probable event of our separation, began to feel anxiously solicitous to see me more eligibly established than under the protection of my father ; and under the impression of fears which assailed her in various shapes, she determined not to delay my presentation at court till another year, as she had previously determined. In consequence of this alteration in her plan, she announced her intentions in a letter to Lord Carloraine,

and directions were given to prepare for our reception in town, a month or two earlier in the winter than the usual time of our removal from Devonshire. Lady Carloraine's ill health did not permit her to attend St. James's; but the Duchess of Albemarle, a near relation of Lord Carloraine's, and a woman of the first consequence in fashionable society, readily undertook the arduous office of presenting me to the royal notice, and of being my *chaperon* through the gaieties of the season. Preparations were accordingly made, under her Grace's superintendance, for my *entrée*, with a splendour befitting the rank, rather than the expectations, of a daughter of the united houses of Rathfarnham and Carloraine; and my mother, with a sort of pardonable vanity, spared no expense for the decorations of dress and ornament. But these advantages I derived only from her individual partiality. From my father, though previously apprized of

its necessity, I received no assistance upon this important occasion of female embellishment. Lord Carloraine had too many powerful necessities of his own to think of parting with any of his money for the more trivial wants of his daughter; and satisfied that if he did not do it for me my mother would, he did not give himself the trouble of inquiring how the expenses of my presentation were to be defrayed. Had his assistance, though fortunately rendered unnecessary by my mother's munificence, been merely offered to my acceptance, it would have gratified my affection: I should have felt that he possessed some of the natural feelings of a parent, and I should have experienced the happiness of believing that he was, in one instance at least, entitled to my gratitude. But even this solitary comfort was denied me; a residence, a bare residence in the house he called his home, was all the tie which now united us, was all for which

Lady Carloraine, in return for her squandered thousands, was indebted to her selfish Lord. Of the allowance originally settled on her at the period of her marriage with him, she had for years received nothing ; it had even at first been irregularly paid, and having at length ceased by his Lordship's direction, she had disdained to remind him of her increased occasion for money. The savings of her jointure, originally destined for my future provision, were unavoidably swallowed up by her establishment in Devonshire ; and aware of the improbability of my inheriting a fortune from my father, equal to the rank I was born to, my mother anxiously retrenched every possible part of her expenditure, to leave Lord Clencorrie's generous gift undiminished for my use ; the interest of which, from the day of my presentation, she entirely appropriated to my separate purse. It had been agreed upon with the Duchess of Albemarle, that I should

be presented at the drawing-room held on her Majesty's birth-day, and the necessary arrangements were made for the occasion. Previous to our leaving Devonshire, Lady Carloraine had promised to pass the holidays with Mrs. Aylmer, the old and valued friend whom I have before mentioned, and a few days before Christmas we went upon our promised visit to Richmond, where General Aylmer had been some years established in a beautiful villa, situated upon the banks of the Thames.

A large and fashionable party were assembled there; for the General, a man of high connexions, though in the decline of life, was of a lively disposition, and occasionally fond of seeing young society about him. He was the life and soul of our party; and when elevated, as was sometimes the case, by the indulgencies of the dinner table, his jocund humour knew no bounds. For the first few days of our visit, we saw but little

of our host ; for the regiment which he commanded had recently returned from foreign service, and his mornings were much occupied in military business at the War-office, from which he usually returned to a late dinner in the evening.

It was during this eventful visit that I first became acquainted with Lord Montague, then the Hon. Richard Neville Montague, and a Major in the regiment of Royal Horse Guards Blue. The General had one day staid in town later than usual, and Mrs. Aylmer, having a dinner party of some consequence, somewhat pettishly refused to accept his apologies for keeping them waiting.—He promised to bring a better excuse the next day—“For do you know,” said he, “I have been running about all the morning with Montague. He is in town upon some business about his regiment, and if he can get it settled he will be down with us to-morrow.—But do you hear, Lady Frances,” added he, address-

ing himself jocosely to me, "I advise you to arm yourself with a seven-fold shield, for if 'all hearts were open, and all desires known,' my friend Montague has been the 'secret wish of every virgin heart,' so long, that, like Alexander the Great, he may sit down and sigh that he has nothing left to conquer."

"Indeed! you quite alarm me, General," said I, laughing; "but till I see this paragon of perfection, I cannot entirely pin my faith on your assertion. I flatter myself that my heart will not be so easily subdued."

"Aye, aye, fine talking! but we shall see," replied the General, leading my mother into the dining parlour, where, in the bustle of a large party, Major Montague and his conquests were entirely forgotten.

On the following day our visitor arrived. He accompanied the General back from London to dinner; and, in the course of the evening, I learnt that

he was to stay a week. Montague was at this period about three and twenty, very tall, and elegantly formed, with a striking military air and fine dark eyes, that, when his countenance was brightened by exercise, or animated by emotion, spoke volumes, and a complexion, brown only from the service which he had been engaged in. Upon his first entering into a military life, under the auspices of General Aylmer, he had served for several years in the General's own regiment, under his immediate care; and during that period he had borne the standard of his country into the four quarters of the world, and had since progressively advanced to his present military rank. Such was Montague when I first beheld him! When he was presented to us by his partial friend, I certainly admitted the General's representation to be just; for I undoubtedly considered him as the finest young man I had ever seen; and whether he really

was, as the General had gaily described him, "*the secret wish of every virgin heart,*" I leave for others to determine ; but I will candidly acknowledge that, from the first week of our acquaintance, he became the cherished hope of mine !

The military avocations, which had at first occupied the General, subsided by degrees, and he was more frequently at home. Montague also gave us all his leisure time, and being easily prevailed on to prolong his visit beyond the week, our family party insensibly grew more interesting. Our evenings were devoted to music, or dancing, and on these occasions he was generally my partner. If we rode out, Montague was my escort ; if we walked, he was invariably at my side ; and, long before the short period of our visit had expired, his eyes, his expressive eyes, had informed me that our partiality was mutual. When the weather permitted, some out-door scheme of amusement usually filled up our

mornings, and cards in the evening principally occupying our sage elders, except at dinner we were rarely all together, and in the bustle incidental to a large family party, Montague's devotion to me passed unobserved by my mother, or Mrs. Aylmer, and even escaped the notice of the jest-loving General.

A happy fortnight had imperceptibly flown away, and the period at length arrived for our visit to conclude. Two days before the important ceremony of my presentation was to take place, we took leave of our hospitable friends and returned to Grosvenor Square. Montague, who had already staid a week longer than he ought to have done, was also to depart for his regiment on the following day. I left Richmond with a heavy heart.—No explanation, not a single expression of preference on either side, had as yet passed between us ; but, confidently relying on the accredited honour of his noble heart, I felt so as-

sured of his regard, that I looked forward without doubt, though certainly not without anxiety, to the period when he should think proper to declare it unequivocally. The probability of any failure in my hopes never entered my imagination, and lulled into perfect security I yielded my whole mind to the illusion which stole so sweetly over my senses.

The next day all was bustle and confusion; it seemed as if this grand event was to decide the colour of my fate. My mother was full of anxiety, up stairs and down, in the drawing-room, in the dining-parlour; hourly she exercised me in the proper ceremonies of the day, so desirous was she that I should acquit myself with elegance and propriety; and while I saw every one around me occupied on my account, *I* only remained uninterested in the event.

Montague had usurped the sole possession of my thinking faculties; and

certain that *he*, in whose eyes I most wished to shine, would not be there to witness my triumph, I felt inattentive to all that passed, and even ungratefully indifferent to my personal appearance; nay, so utterly careless as to its effect, that had not my mother's heart been wholly bent on my making this brilliant entrée, I should scarcely have regretted any circumstance which might have happened to prevent it.

At length the important morning came. The Duchess dressed early, and came to Grosvenor Square to superintend my toilet. Two tedious hours passed in the business of decoration, and practising the instructions I had previously received. At last I was dressed—armed for conquest, as her Grace gaily protested, and blazing in all the jewellery of my mother's ransacked stores, I accompanied the Duchess in her new equipage to St. James's. Never shall I forget the emotions, the exultations, of

my proud and partial mother, as, habited in my court dress, she surveyed me with eyes of transport from head to foot.—It could only be equalled by the sensations which overpowered her, as the Duchess afterwards recounted the gracious reception I had been honoured with.

The drawing-room was on that day uncommonly full; a crowded and brilliant assemblage had met to congratulate the Sovereign upon his recovery from a painful indisposition, and the pressure was inconceivable. A considerable time elapsed before we could approach the throne, and, oppressed with the unusual weight of my magnificent drapery, the excessive heat of the room, and the overpowering observation of the crowd about me, I felt nearly fainting with fatigue; and the awful ceremony of my presentation to her Majesty being concluded, the Duchess only waited to introduce me to some of her particular friends, who were still within the circle, before

she requested a nobleman of her acquaintance to get her carriage up, for the heat was becoming too intense to permit us to stay an instant longer than was unavoidable.

As I followed her slowly down the room, led by a young man of high fashion, to whose care her Grace had consigned me, my eyes carelessly wandered over the brilliant circle that surrounded us, and placed at a distance amidst the glittering throng, and earnestly regarding me, my glance casually rested on the countenance of Montague! The blood rushed instantaneously to my face, the deep tint upon my cheek became evidently deeper, and my heart beat with surprise and pleasure, as I perceived him attempting to make his way to us through the crowd! Surely it was not too flattering to believe, that the interest which he had before appeared to feel for me had now brought him hither; for his departure from Rich-

mond had been positively fixed for the preceding morning, and I knew that he had before exceeded the time which the General approved of for his absence from his regiment. Be this as it might, this silent, but conclusive proof of his attention, gratified my feelings infinitely more than all the loud-whispered admiration which had on that day greeted my ears. Montague joined us in the anti-room, and, pressing my hand with a look and manner sufficiently expressive of his partial approbation, he inquired respectfully after Lady Carloraine, and was proceeding to give some reason for his lingering in town, at a time when he ought to be elsewhere, when the Duchess's carriage being loudly announced, and re-echoed through the long line of servants in waiting, Lord Robert Spencer, my conductor, hastily drew me after her Grace, who was already descending, and hurried me from Montague, without giving me time

even to bid him farewell. I soothed my vexation, however, with the hope that something might occur to detain him longer in London; and consoling myself with the prospect of soon seeing him again, fatigued and dispirited I returned to Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Hope told a flattering tale,
That joy would soon return,
But nought can sighs avail,
For love is doom'd to mourn ! ”

“ *HOPE deferred maketh the heart sick.* ” Of the painful verification of this well-known adage, I soon became an involuntary instance ; for, during the two months which succeeded this day of conscious triumph, I looked for Montague in vain ! in vain my wandering eyes hourly sought him amidst the changing circle of public places, for I saw him no more ; and the explanation so anxiously anticipated, so eagerly desired, came not at all, and my visionary hopes faded into air ! Slowly and reluctantly my confidence in him was withdrawn, and I secretly experienced the bitterest feelings of disappointment.

Under the mortifying influence of these sensations, I deeply lamented the folly which had induced me thus to throw away my heart upon a being who evidently slighted it, and I wept in proud anguish over the demolition of my fairy prospects. Montague, however, rose superior to all my efforts to forget him, and still kept possession of the deepest recesses of my aching heart. I could not bear even to condemn him for the humiliating feelings I endured; and if his remembrance, associated with the idea of deception, crossed my imagination, I indignantly drove the hateful vision from my mind.

Hurried from place to place, and incessantly dragged from one scene of gaiety to another, in the perpetual round of dissipation in which the splendid connexions of the Duchess of Albemarle engaged me, my name became conspicuous in the annals of fashionable society. My simple manners were admired,

my dress copied as a model of imitation in the public prints of the day, and I unconsciously became an object of tonish notoriety. The admiration I had thus excited, or rather the fashion I was in, for it was to the exertions of her Grace of Albemarle that I was indebted for my celebrity, filled the heart of my mother with exultation and delight!

Amidst the splendid follies of the world, she feared not the contamination of my principles, or my heart. Secure in the purity of the morals she had inculcated, Lady Carloraine dreaded not the annihilation of my reflective habits, and glorying in the approbation I had so generally excited, she proudly prognosticated the triumph which eventually crowned my path. My mind was, notwithstanding, torn with torturing recollections; the image of Montague incessantly haunted my thoughts; and these painful sensations had visible influence on my person.—I became pale, thin,

and dispirited, but this was attributed to late hours and change in my habits of life: the former was easily remedied by the applications of art, but the latter remained irremediable. My malady was beyond the reach of medicine; I literally "*pined in thought*;" and, as nothing could relieve me from the unguessed sufferings of my aching heart, my nights were still sleepless, and my days passed in tears.

" Oh! how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glories of an April day,
Which now-shows all the beauty of the sun
And by and by a cloud takes all away!"

Lord Carloraine, possibly flattered by the estimation in which I was held, for I had also been described as slightly resembling him in person, found his vanity infinitely gratified even by this trivial circumstance, and honoured me in consequence with a larger portion of notice. He now occasionally condescended to mix in parties to which I was invited

and once or twice during the winter, led me out from the Opera with a sort of something like parental pride; and though he contributed nothing to the personal splendour of my appearance, he was by no means unwilling to appropriate the credit of it to himself; and, upon some few occasions, he also gave entertainments at which he directed me to preside. My mother, secretly rejoiced at the change in the Earl's behaviour, hourly urged the necessity of improving his growing regard. She, however, still passed her own time as before, much alone: a very limited number of visitors were admitted to her circle, and of these, Mrs. Aylmer and the General invariably claimed the preference. Mrs. Aylmer had been the bosom friend of her earliest years, and she still considered her with the affection of a favourite sister. The General was also much attached to her, and partially fond of me from my infancy. He remarked my faded countenance

with regret, and cursing the late hours which he said had stolen my roses, he pressed my mother to follow them for a week or two to Richmond. Lady Carloline readily promised to accept their invitation, but delayed it till near the usual time of our leaving London. She vainly flattered herself that Lord Carloline was growing fond of me ; and, at her desire, I sedulously endeavoured to incite his future affection. The interest I had acquired was however merely transient ; I had gratified his vanity, but I had never interested his heart ; and now that the first blaze of my appearance was over, and the public curiosity respecting me had subsided, the momentary impression which it had made on him evaporated, and he relapsed, if not into his former indifference, at least into negligence very nearly approximating to it.

During the winter Sir Edward Montresor, a young baronet of an ancient

family, whom I had occasionally met in the Duchess's circle, had been captivated by my appearance, and made proposals of marriage in due form. Lord Carloraine, who it is possible looked forward to a more dignified alliance, merely named them to me, and allowed me to decline them without even asking my reason for it. To these succeeded others, and the Earl of Winterborne, a nobleman many years my senior, but a widower, and a man of fashion, was amongst them a candidate for my hand. His connexions were of the first rank, his fortune large, and his person still attractive; but the predominant form of Montague still floated in my imagination, and I declined the offered honour without a moment's hesitation. Lord Carloraine, in this instance, seemed amazed at my indifference; he could discover no possible reason for my objection to this alliance, and in spite of my entreaties he appeared disposed to favour Lord

Winterborne's pretensions. My earnest assurances that I felt no regard for him, he treated with ridicule; he begged that I would not indulge him with any specimens of romance; and it appearing, that with his Lordship nothing but convenience was to be consulted in a matrimonial speculation, I augured a painful trial should any other proposal of the like nature be made to me. Public report, however, had already disposed of me; and my rejection of Lord Winterborne becoming known, another alliance became talked of as actually decided upon. Lord Robert Spencer, whom I have before named, a young man of high rank and captivating manners, the second son of a noble Duke, and the heir to all the honours of a rich uncle, was generally reported to be the object of my choice. I had danced with Lord Robert at many balls during the winter; we were intimately acquainted, and both being looked up to as the "glass

of fashion" for our respective sexes, a mutual attachment was deemed inevitable; and by these means our names became associated in the chit-chat of the day, without more foundation than the customary civilities of polished society. Whenever Lord Robert was named to me as my captive, I invariably disclaimed the envied conquest of his wandering heart; but the report of our approaching marriage was already spread abroad, and my denial of it was considered as the mere result of maiden modesty. Lord Robert himself, possibly flattered by the circumstance of two such eligible offers being believed to be rejected for him, did not perhaps give himself the trouble to contradict it very decidedly; and continuing his usual attentions in public, which, as they were confined to general civilities, I saw no cause to decline, the rumour still gained ground, and even the exact day of our union was reported to be fixed. Lord

Carloline had frequently questioned me on the subject, and though I had repeatedly assured him that there was not the smallest foundation for the report, he did not give to my assertion all the credit it deserved.

There appeared to be but one opinion prevalent respecting it, and his Lordship considering it as an improvable prospect himself, signified his pleasure that it should be encouraged by me. A match with Lord Robert would have gratified his vainest hopes; for his elder brother was known to be in a deep decline, and he was confidently looked up to as the heir of his family honours: but, conscious that I had never received any attention from him to warrant the delicacy of conduct which Lord Carloline suggested, I shrunk with disgust from the execution of his mercenary project, and strove to lose in dissipation the reflections that still distracted me. Weary of the frivolous amusements I was daily

engaged in, I began to count the hours till our departure from London. I detested most of the persons I was obliged to associate with, and looked forward with anxiety to our promised visit to Richmond. There I vainly hoped to find tranquillity and repose, or, at least to be freed from the arduous task of supporting the character I was in town compelled to perform.

From the day on which we had been so abruptly separated by Lord Robert, at St. James's, the vision of Montague had never once blessed my sight; and, during the whole of this busy winter, through which I had fluttered a "*season's glitter*," I had not even heard his name. I had latterly seen but little of the Aylmer family, and in those short interviews a spirit of wounded pride had deterred me from seeking intelligence of him. Placed from the time of his father's death, under the immediate care of General Aylmer, he was, both by his

Lady and himself, considered as the son of their best affections. They had lost their only child in infancy, but Montague had richly supplied the vacuum in their hearts, and I knew that he was in habits of affectionate correspondence with them. That I had been deceived, most cruelly deceived, by appearances, I was perfectly well aware; and although I could not acquit Montague of having been accessory to my present wretchedness, in misleading me by attentions which he now obviously meant not to continue, and by these means disingenuously exciting hopes that he had no intention to realize, I yet hesitated to believe him guilty of intentional deception; and however his former conduct had been calculated to impress me with the certainty of his regard, I well remembered that he had carefully abstained from uttering a single syllable upon the subject; and blaming myself, chiefly, for the weakness which had drawn me into

this "*paradise of fools*," I tasked my heart to recover its serenity in vain! Montague was still the worshipped idol of my imagination! By *his* standard I estimated the merit of every human being I became acquainted with; and *he* was the criterion by which I judged the worth of all the world. The sentiments he had occasionally expressed, the observations I had heard him utter, were all tenaciously treasured in my memory: I invariably referred to them for authority upon every subject, and never, never, but in the solitary instance of his own misconduct, did his judgment once deceive me! Lady Carloline had not the slightest suspicion of my attachment; had it once occurred to her, she would instantly have gained a clue to the frequent indisposition which I was not always successful enough to conceal from maternal observation; but, attributing them entirely to the hurried life I lived in town, she flattered

herself that air and exercise, with the resumption of my former early habits, would effectually restore my faded bloom, when we became quietly settled in the country again. I suffered her to soothe her uneasiness with these fancies; I uttered no complaints that might dissipate her hopes; but I had "*that within which passeth show*;" and, mentally convinced that my cure would not be so easily accomplished, as soon as the birthday issued its sovereign mandate of dismissal, we left London and once more visited Richmond.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW days after our arrival, the General's two nieces came upon a visit to their aunt. Mrs. Aylmer had invited them to pass the period of our stay there; for, apprized of my indisposition, she fancied that the society of these young people might be beneficial to me. Their father, Sir James Aylmer, the General's elder brother, and a man of dissipated character, had wasted a splendid patrimony in pursuits which afforded him neither profit or pleasure in the recollection; and by way of recruiting his shattered finances, he had married, somewhat late in life, the gay daughter of a rich citizen of St. Mary Axe; and his Lady, suddenly transplanted into the improving soil of the western hemisphere, entered, with equal avidity, into the general

habits of her new connexion, and readily assisted him in dissipating the property with which she had first purchased the Baronet's affections, or rather his title. They were now, with a family of two daughters and a son, all growing up with an equal taste for extravagance, a very necessitous, but very fashionable pair.

Sir James played high, and in consequence of this habit he supported his town establishment with much difficulty. The General had frequently assisted him with large sums to provide for the heavy contingencies which occasionally assailed him ; but provoked at the thoughtless manner in which they were sometimes disposed of, he had repeatedly urged him to part with his expensive residence in Park Lane, and retire into the country till his affairs were better settled. Lady Aylmer, a woman of a weak mind, though possessed notwithstanding of a considerable degree of art, was still blindly partial to the gaieties of a London

life; and strenuously objecting to the execution of this plan, she warily persuaded her husband that the interests of her daughters, now rapidly advancing to womanhood, would be materially injured by it. The Baronet, easily prevailed upon to agree to that which he best liked, seized upon this pretence as an excuse for his non-compliance; and the Lady carrying her point in defiance of the General's advice, a sort of coolness had subsisted between the families, for some time, upon this account. Lady Aylmer however still cast a longing eye upon the ample fortune of her wealthy brother-in-law, and well aware of the risk of offending him too deeply, had latterly taken much pains to mollify his anger; and infinitely gratified by Mrs. Aylmer, who was by no means fond of them, having, upon the occasion of my visit, invited her daughters to Richmond, she had carefully directed them, at all events, to possess themselves of their uncle's appro-

bation. But to these girls I soon conceived an insuperable dislike; they had been educated at a fashionable boarding school, which they had recently quitted, and to the usual frivolous loquacity of school girls, superadded an assurance that would not have disgraced even the brow of a veteran Barrister. In their unimportant and wearying *babil*, the horrors of "balm tea beverage" and the threatened terrors of the "clock seat," with the comparative merits of their late preceptress and her competitors, were incessantly discussed; whilst the powerful claims of S — n, C — h, and others of our patrician dashers, to the supereminence of notoriety, hourly underwent the trying ordeal of their criticism; and even Lord Robert Spencer, of whose reported engagement to me I soon found them well informed, came in for his share of these never-ending discussions. Ellen, the eldest, was about eighteen, tall and slightly formed, with flaxen hair and

and blue eyes of the most languishing softness; her manners were, at times, even childish from affectation; but under the appearance of almost infantine simplicity, I readily discerned an ample share of her mother's art. Well aware of the lucrative consequence of the General's partiality, she had strictly complied with Lady Aylmer's injunctions, and now wheedled and fondled round her uncle with a servility disgusting to an unprejudiced observer, while the good old man, flattered by the playful follies of his pretty niece, appeared insensible of the motive, and tolerated her caprices with boundless indulgence. Margaret, the other sister, was literally "*breathing brass*:" her manners were bold and forward; and infinitely disgusted with her kittenish familiarity, I repelled her advances towards intimacy with dislike. These girls were my abomination; the youngest in particular annoyed me exceedingly; and although I

invariably conducted myself with all the *hauteur* I was mistress of, I could with difficulty repress the occasional pertness of her manners. She had acquired a habit of saying smart things, and having naturally a quick turn of the eye, and much archness of countenance, she fancied herself a wit, although she had in reality no pretensions to the character; but affecting it upon all occasions, and sparing none in her rude sallies, she made herself, to me at least, excessively disagreeable; and a sort of civil hostility soon commenced between us.

We had been at Richmond about a week, when one day the General, who had brought some friends home to dinner with him, casually informed Mrs Aylmer that he had met Lord Montague in town, and that he had promised to spend a few days with them at Richmond. "He is going into the North," said he, "as soon as poor Beauchamp's affairs are settled, and I have made him promise to

give us a day or two before he sets out. I should think that he will be down on Friday, or perhaps Saturday." Of Lord Montague I had frequently heard before: during our former visit he was at Bath, in an indifferent state of health, and I had heard Montague, to whom he was an elder brother, speak of his indisposition with uneasiness. I had never however seen him, and I pondered in my mind on his probable likeness to his brother.

The following Friday, Lord Montague arrived. I saw a curricie pass the window, whilst I was writing in the library; but engrossed by my employment, our expected visitor did not occur to my recollection, till on entering the breakfast room, nearly half an hour afterwards, Montague himself, dressed in the deepest mourning, rose to meet me! I felt as if I should have sunk upon the floor. My whole frame was in a tremour from agitation and surprise; but hastily recovering

myself, I replied to his salutation with assumed firmness of manner, and readily accounted for my ignorance of his being the expected guest of the General, when I shortly learned from the tenour of the conversation, that his brother, the previous Lord Montague, was recently dead ; and that Montague, having succeeded to the title and estates, had been some time in London, arranging his affairs, which had been left in great disorder. He was but little altered in his person since we had last met, except that as I glanced my eye over him, I fancied he was grown somewhat thinner ; but his manner had evidently undergone a striking change. He was not gay and animated, as I had formerly seen him, but thoughtful and reserved ; sometimes almost melancholy, which I attributed to the recent death of his brother, to whom I knew he had been much attached : to the General and his Lady he seemed as affectionate as formerly ; to my mother he was respect-

fully attentive ; but to *me* he wore an air of high and distant civility which puzzled, as well as at first pained me. In a few days, as he became more domesticated with us, his reserve in some degree diminished : he relapsed more into his former self ; but of the partiality his conduct had before implied, not a single symptom seemed remaining. Deeply hurt by indifference so perceptible, my pride was also wounded by the consideration which he sometimes affected towards the prattling Aylmers, and roused into resentment by the cold politeness of his altered carriage, I assumed a distance equal to his own, and which the following incident imperceptibly increased. A trunk, containing some articles of summer millinery, had been one morning sent from a fashionable shop in Bond Street for our inspection, and we were busily employed in the survey of this new finery, when Mrs. Aylmer, who dressed very plainly herself, having carelessly thrown her eye

over it, left Lady Carloraine to her netting, and accompanied the gentlemen into the garden, to superintend the launch of a new pleasure boat, which the General had recently purchased. Some time afterwards they returned—"Come, girls," said the General, putting his head in at the window, "put up your frippery, and get your bonnets on for a drive." We were all quickly in motion; the Aylmers began to stuff the millinery into the packing cases, and I was separating some few articles I had purchased, when Mrs Aylmer, who had left us in grand debate upon the merits of a fashionable mantle, casually asked why I had not chosen it? "Dear aunt!" exclaimed Miss Margaret, significantly, "you forget that Lady Frances has decided on a *spencer*." The pun was too common place to bear the slightest imputation of wit; yet it fully answered the purpose of provoking me. My face flushed like scarlet; the General laughed

aloud, and as I bent over the millinery to hide the effects of her impertinence, I perceived that Lord Montague attentively regarded me. He stopped for a few moments at the window, with the General; and then going into the stable yard, hastened the barouche round to the door, and we departed on our drive. During the remainder of this day, the purest spite filled my bosom; I could scarcely compel myself to be even commonly civil to my tormentor, notwithstanding the petulance of my answers only furnished her with fresh amusement.

About this period, Lord Montague and the General were, as formerly, much in town; their mornings as before were mostly devoted to private business, but their evenings were invariably given to us at home, and I soon began to perceive, that, under the mask of girlish simplicity, the elder of our young ladies was spreading a snare for his heart. When

she looked at him, her blue eyes swam in languishing sweetness; soft, half-checked sighs, seemed to issue from her bosom; and stung to the soul by the attention which he sometimes lent to her, I soon felt that this girl, whom I had hitherto regarded with such contempt, was still formidable enough to rouse the bitterest feelings of my heart. Miss Aylmer's conduct, I did not doubt, had been adopted under the direction of her Lady mother, who, in a dinner visit to Richmond, some few days before, had seemed anxiously solicitous to fix his attention on her elder hope. The young lady, after a scientific dissertation upon painting, and the inspection of some beautiful drawings of her own, or at least her master's production, had been directed to display the superiority of her execution in some difficult lessons upon the piano-forte, and when her performances had been admired to Lady Aylmer's satisfaction, her sylph-like figure was

next most indulgently translated to the harp ; upon which, to do her justice, she was also a tolerable performer. But the discovery of these fascinating powers seemed to make no extraordinary impression upon Lord Montague. He did not withhold his admiration of her talents ; but he did not appear to consider either a singing, or a dancing wonder, as a very desirable acquisition for a wife, and having witnessed the elaborate display of all the showy tinsel which composed Miss Aylmer's education, I have seen him quit the room, evidently wearied with the exhibition, and declining the preconcerted walking party of the misses, wander away into the plantations by himself. This palpable manifestation of their design gave me great uneasiness ; the strong interest I still felt for him possibly sharpened my penetration, and, studying the character of the sighing damsel with deep attention, I soon became convinced of the consummate art

of which she was mistress ; and dreading, lest Montague might be entangled in the snare, I regarded her with a sentiment little short of detestation. I condemned myself however for suffering my mind to be so wholly given to circumstances which wrung my heart with secret anguish, and painfully convinced that Montague, however he had formerly seemed to desire it, had no longer the wish to be more than a mere acquaintance to me ; and that he had in fact forgotten, or at least seemed to have forgotten, all that had passed on our former visit, which he never upon any occasion now adverted to, I endeavoured to rouse myself into the exertion of more fortitude, and determined to wrest him from my heart, be the consequence what it might. But my resolution showed far better in theory, than in practice. I was totally unable to banish him from my mind ; and Montague, who neglected me, who scarcely seemed even to perceive me when in the

room with him, was still the object which engrossed my every thought. It was during these days of painful inquietude, that my imagination composed the following irregular lines.

'Twas not thine eye, though mildly bright,
'Twas not the cheek of roseate hue,
'Twas not thy form's commanding height,
Attracted first my partial view.

No! 'twas affection's watchful glance,
That first my careless fancy caught;
And, speaking volumes to my soul,
Love's first and timid lesson taught.

Too aptly learnt!—To win *thy* praise,
My proudest hope; my lov'd employ,
To steal from thee some new idea,
To scheme for thee some future joy!

Ah! why to lull me into transient bliss,
Why would'st thou calmly sport away my peace?
Why wake such fleeting visionary hopes,
Then bid the fairy dream for ever cease.

Yet not from me shall one complaint escape,
No fever'd phrase my proud regret impart;
Still smiles shall mantle ^{on} my fading cheek,
Though midnight tears consume my with'ring heart!

Then unrestrain'd through long, lone hours I weep,
And mourn my folly, and my fate severe,
Whilst keen remembrance chases soothing sleep,
To "light on lids unsullied with a tear."

Though *thou* art alter'd, yet thy treasur'd form
Still deeply hoarded in my breast shall dwell;
Still partial memory paint thy fancied worth,
And pensive stolen tears thy influence tell.

Oh! lov'd, till life shall charm no more,
Till every struggling pang be past,
Till earthly ties dissolve in air,
Still must this fatal error last!

And when at length life's harass'd scene shall close,
My spirit, verging on that "solemn bourne,"
Ling'ring, shall breathe its parting prayer for thee,
Then pass the barrier, never to return!

But still, beyond the grave, my enfranchis'd soul
Shall watch, with ceaseless care, the waning life,
Still hover near thee in thy erring hours,
Thy guardian angel through the path of strife.

And oft when memory amidst scenes long past
Recalls my blighted hopes, and faith sincere,
E'en *thy* cold heart may heave one conscious sigh,
May give departed worth one grateful tear!

The composition and repetition of these melancholy stanzas, formed the principal occupation of my solitary hours. Nightly and daily they were ever upon my lips, and I wept with uncontrollable sorrow as I repeated them. Oppressed almost beyond endurance with these painful feelings, I sometimes lingered at

my window, after the family had retired to rest, listening for hours, during the stillness of the night, to the distant rippling of the water, or to the plaintive notes of the nightingale, of which there were numbers in Richmond Park, singing

“ Her sorrows through the night,
Till wide around, the woods sigh to her song,
And the grey morn lifts its pale lustre
On the paler wretch, exanimate by love.”

From the tedious society of the younger Aylmers, I usually escaped to the welcome privacy of my own apartment; for however pleasant they might occasionally be to others, to me they were at all times inconceivably disagreeable, and I consequently avoided them, as much as I deemed consistent with the respect I owed them, as the nieces of the General; but for my indifference they had ample compensation in the civilities of Lord Montague, who, having known

them in infancy, treated them with an attention that gratified their vanity infinitely more than mine could have done, though it was, nevertheless, sometimes checked by reserve.

One Sunday morning Miss Margaret, with her habitual rudeness, having seized the newspaper the instant it was brought in, the General, seeing but little chance of soon regaining it, called to her to read it aloud for general information. The young Lady complied, and had recited several of the most interesting articles with tolerable enunciation, when Ellen, who was leaning at her elbow, and overlooking the paper as it lay spread upon the breakfast-table before her, suddenly uttered an exclamation of surprise, and directing an arch glance across the table to her uncle, her finger slyly pointed out the following paragraph to Margaret's observation :—
“ We are informed, from undoubted authority, that the marriage of Lord

Robert Spencer with the only daughter of a noble Earl is shortly to take place ; the preliminaries are finally arranged. The parties have left town, and the nuptial ceremony is intended to precede their return." The allusion was too palpable for its object to be mistaken ; my face was instantly in a glow ; whilst Margaret, delighted with the evident *embarras* which it occasioned, slowly repeated the paragraph with the most significant emphasis of look and manner. Provoked beyond expression, I trifled over my tea-cup, scarcely conscious of what I was doing ; but as I cast down my eyes, to hide the confusion of my countenance, they casually encountered those of Lord Montague. "*The hectic of a moment*" passed rapidly across his cheek ; and the General was uttering some commonplace witticisms upon the subject of matrimony, when the bells suddenly beginning to chime for church, at which the family were constant attendants, we

hastily separated to prepare for it, and I fortunately escaped further persecution from our joking host, or his insufferable nieces.

The weather was uncommonly warm, and having loitered for some time after the service was over, at the tomb of the poet Thomson, who lies buried under a plain monument in Richmond church, Mrs. Aylmer and Lady Carloraine drove home without waiting for us, leaving us to return by a shady path, along the banks of the river. The day was exceedingly beautiful, and as we slowly strolled home by the water side, the Aylmers bitterly bewailed their absence from Kensington Gardens, on the last day on which it was deemed fashionable to be visible there ; and so successfully coaxed their uncle to drive them to town, that, ever ready to indulge them in the gratification of their fancies, he promptly agreed to the execution of this wild scheme, provided they could them-

selves supply the want of a proper *chaperon*, neither Mrs. Aylmer or my mother choosing to participate in their amusement. "Oh! they were quite certain that *ma* would be so happy to go with them, and if uncle would but stay one moment for her in Park Lane, *ma* would be so delighted." They endeavoured to engage me in their scampering party, but, not having forgiven the impertinence of the morning, nor liking the scheme altogether, I felt little inclination to accompany them. Montague subjoined his entreaties; but, determined to convince him that, although *he* solicited, I could still withstand the temptation, I persisted in refusing; and coldly declining the invitation, the Misses hastened to array themselves in the usual elegance of Kensington costume, and set off in high spirits for this scene of tonish splendour.

Some hours after the party returned *en cavalcade*; Sir James with Lady Ayl-

mer, and her youngest daughter with the General, in his barouche, and Lord Montague's curricie driven furiously by Miss Aylmer, who, having taken the reins by way of frolic on leaving London, still kept possession of them, in playful obstinacy, to the no small annoyance of her discomfited companion; who, wearied by the want of skill and perseverance of his charioteer, sulkily assisted her to alight from the carriage, whilst her delighted mother complimented her upon the intrepidity of her performance.

“Upon my word, Ellen,” said her Ladyship, “you are a very excellent whip.”

“She at least is a *fearless* one,” muttered Montague, ungraciously leaving the Lady to find her way in by herself, whilst he carefully examined the sides and shoulders of his panting horses. The grooms were by this time come up with the curricie, and resigning the reeking animals into their care, he walk-

ed into the dining-room in evident ill-humour.

Dinner was already placed upon the table, and, as conversation became general, his displeasure partly subsided; but not so Mrs. Aylmer's, a cloud had been gathering upon *her* countenance for some time: we had waited considerably past the usual dinner hour for their return, and the old Lady, who was somewhat irritable in her temper, and did not love to see "God's creatures spoiled," became exceedingly angry at the appearance which it presented, from the natural consequence of their delay, and regardless of the presence of the Baronet and his Lady, continued to vent her displeasure, in suppressed murmurings, as long as the dishonoured dishes remained in sight. The General, who wisely made it a rule to let the storm take its course, quietly ate his dinner without hazarding any excuse, silyly motioning however, at intervals, to Monta-

gue to prevail on her to take wine with him, and, by these means, restore the banished sunshine of her good humour.

The younger ladies, whose high spirits were in no wise intimidated by the visible anger of their aunt, rattled away in despite of her cross looks, and delightfully recounted all the gay and gallant things which had been said to them by the beaux, whom they had encountered in their promenade. Miss Aylmer in particular was unusually loquacious; the arrangement of the party had given Lord Montague entirely to herself, and wisely resolving to profit by the opportunity, she had talked to him upon all sorts of subjects within her knowledge, and, as it appeared, completely overpowered him with the multiplicity of her attainments. Montague, who, with all his habitual deference to women, could not endure the assumption of masculine manners in a female, felt greatly disgusted by the morning's exhibition; and still

smarting under the recollection of his flagellated favourites, made his dinner too in silence; and confining his civilities principally to my mother, and Lady Aylmer, he kept up, for the rest of the day, a civil distance towards her daughter. I had never seen him out of temper before. I owed Miss Aylmer a secret spite for her mischievous pertness in the morning, and I confess that I was malicious enough to rejoice at his displeasure.

As soon as the carriage drove from the door, to take Lady Aylmer and the Baronet back to town, the girls brought their bonnets, and endeavoured, as usual, to engage him in a walk. Montague, however, was still much too stately to comply with their invitation, and, coldly declining it, he took his hat from the hall table, and walked out by himself.

“ I suppose that I have most wofully offended my Lord Montague,” said the elder Miss Aylmer, as he stalked sullenly past the window.

“And not without reason,” replied her Aunt, with some asperity, “for you have half killed his favourite horses.”

“Lord! Aunt! men always make such a fuss about their horses!” cried the young Lady;—“if I had *quite* killed them, he could not have shown more airs about it. He is very grand, I perceive, but it’s of no sort of consequence, however,” continued she, pertly.

“*A merciful man will be merciful to his beast, child,*” answered her Aunt.

Miss Aylmer shook her flaxen ringlets from her brow, and, tying on her bonnet, took her sister by the arm, and walked poutingly into the garden.

Montague still kept aloof, and preferring the enjoyment of his own reflections to their society, he turned into the public path, by the water side, as soon as he perceived them in the garden; and, bending his way along the banks of the river, I watched him as he crossed the fields which led towards the church-

yard ; and the beautiful ode of Collins

“ Beneath yon bank a Druid lies, &c.”

arose in my memory, as I guessed that a coincident recollection might, at that moment, occupy his mind.

From his frequent solitary strolls, I observed that Montague usually returned with increased thoughtfulness of manner ; and, tremblingly alive to every circumstance that concerned him, I feared that, notwithstanding his occasional inattention, the arts of Ellen Aylmer had partly succeeded in making an impression upon his heart. I watched his deportment towards her with restless anxiety, but from my observations I could gather little ; for when the family were all together his attention was necessarily divided, and of what passed in their daily walking parties, which I never joined, I was totally ignorant. The reserve of my behaviour, which, at first, originated in the coolness of his own, had imperceptibly widened into

distance; the casual interchange of unavoidable civility was all that, upon any occasion, ever passed between us, and I felt convinced that some more fortunate being had entirely superseded me in his regard; but that Miss Aylmer was not the subject of his pensive meditations, I was shortly afterwards assured. One beautiful morning, towards the latter end of June, the General and Lord Montague rode out, as was their custom after breakfast. Mrs. Aylmer and my mother went to pay a morning visit to Roehampton, and leaving the girls engaged with their harp-master, who came to Richmond to attend them, I sent my drawing materials to a little temple in the pleasure grounds, to finish a sketch, which I had begun, of a beautiful view up the river. I had pursued my amusement some hours without interruption, when the voices of the General and his companion, returning from their ride, drew me from my pencil. The weather was uncommonly sultry, not a breath of air was stirring;

and, giving their horses to the groom, they had returned through a shady lane into the grounds, and, overcome with fatigue, the General threw himself upon a seat, under the windows of the temple, which were thickly shaded by the drooping larches that hung around it. The heat was excessive—not a breeze fanned the leaves, and, as the sashes were all thrown open for air, the impressive tones of Montague arrested my attention.

“It is not the impulse of a moment,” said he, continuing their conversation, “but the result of deep reflection that decides my resolution. The Earl’s avowal has at once ascertained the fact, and now that the woman for whom I would have sacrificed my existence is actually affianced to another, and that other, too, the object of her own choice, feelings, which I can combat no longer, convince me of the necessity of the measure I have resolved upon.”

I listened in breathless agony : much as I had anticipated this soul-harrowing

certainly, the unequivocal declaration of his affection for another at once overwhelmed me; it seemed as if a bolt of ice had suddenly shot through my veins, and though I dreaded every instant lest they should come round into the temple, I wanted power to move a step from the spot where it had transfixed me.

The General's answer I could not accurately distinguish, but Montague eagerly replied, "Do not urge me farther, I cannot calmly witness it; and my resolution to avoid this trial must necessarily shorten my stay. To-morrow," added he, sighing, "to-morrow will be a sort of farewell at Windsor. I suppose that my business will be gazetted on Saturday, and I shall merely wait for that before I set out for the North. Greenwood can do what farther is necessary without me, and at present, I believe, I had best bury myself in the Highlands."

"You are a noble fellow, Montague,"

said the General, "and deserve a happier fate!"

"I am, at least, a wretched one," answered Montague, rising suddenly, his voice faltering with emotion; and taking his friend by the arm, they walked forward to the house.

For some minutes I remained absolutely motionless upon my seat; the bitter certainty that Montague loved, and loved unhappily, sunk deeply into my heart, and agitated me with emotions indescribable. The avowal of his apostasy I had heard from his own lips; and the last faint ray of hope, which had yet lingered in my bosom, now entirely deserted me! A violent passion of tears at length came to my relief; but, overpowered with sensations of the most complicated nature, I sat stupified in the temple, till the half-hour bell rung for dinner. I returned to the house, fortunately unseen by the family, and in a state of mind unfit for company, which

I knew, on this day, consisted mostly of gentlemen. I went immediately to my room, and, sending an excuse into the dining-room, I threw myself on the bed, and wept away some painful hours. At tea time I summoned resolution to go down; the voices from the dining-room told me that the gentlemen had not yet left it, and my excuses of weariness from a long walk, and the warm weather, satisfied my mother and Mrs. Aylmer. At length the rest of the party came dropping in from their wine; my heart beat violently as Montague entered the room, but more so, when the General approached Mrs. Aylmer, upon some of the gentlemen speaking of the review which was to take place at Windsor the next morning, and said, "We shall not return to-morrow till very late—possibly not to dinner; though I shall endeavour to do it, for Montague tells me that he must leave us on Saturday, and

I have many things to arrange with him before his departure."

"On Saturday!" exclaimed Mrs. Aylmer with surprise, "this is very sudden—is it not?"

"The occasion is urgent," answered the General; and his eye accidentally fell upon me as he spoke.

I trembled with agitation—my countenance, I am persuaded, must have changed materially; for the General looked at me with attention, while Mrs. Aylmer questioned Montague, who at that moment joined us.

"And so you go on Saturday? and pray, when are we to see you again?"

"That will depend upon circumstances," he answered. "Yes, on Saturday," continued he, sighing, "I must leave you. I believe we shall go abroad; and, though many months may elapse, before I shall have the happiness of revisiting Richmond, my memory will

faithfully record the days of sun-shine I have passed *here*."

He spoke impressively; and kissing her hand as he concluded, Mrs. Aylmer put her handkerchief to her eyes, and wiped away a tear. A desultory conversation ensuing, respecting his departure, his destination for foreign service, the review which was to take place on the morrow, and other incidental subjects, Montague soon removed to bear a part in it. During this scene, not daring to trust my voice, I sat perfectly silent, with my eyes fixed upon a book, lest the involuntary tears, which gushed into them, should betray the feelings of my heart. These, and other casual subjects, occupied the conversation till it was time for the visitors to depart. We shortly afterwards separated for the night, sooner than was our usual custom, on account of the gentlemen being to rise at an early hour to prepare for the review; Mrs. Aylmer having previously

exacted from them a promise to return to dinner ; for, as it was to be the last day of Lord Montague's visit, she positively insisted on their returning to pass it with us at home.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the morning of the review, I arose with the dawn. I had passed a long and sleepless night in painful reflection, but towards morning I sunk into a slumber, from which I was aroused by the voice of Montague in the stable-yard, which one of the windows of my apartment overlooked. I instantly left my bed, and, wrapping myself in a dressing-gown, waited, shaded by the festoon drapery of the window-curtain, to observe their departure. He was directing his groom in some alteration of his curricie harness, at intervals caressing or checking his beautiful horses, whilst the spirited animals, impatient of delay, pawed the ground, in restive eagerness to depart. It was yet early morning; they were to breakfast at Windsor, with some mi-

litary friends, previous to joining the troops at Swinley ; but the General had not yet appeared, and Montague, as he waited for him, paced the stable-yard in deep abstraction, his arms folded, and his eyes bent on the ground. He wore, on this occasion, the splendid uniform of the Royal Horse Guards Blue, in which he was, on this day, to officiate as Major for the last time, having been recently appointed to a command in another regiment. I contemplated his striking figure with admiration, as, habited in his rich military dress, he slowly paced the pavement, and never in my life did I behold such a finished form ! Concealed by the friendly drapery of the window-curtains, I remained gazing at him till the General was ready ; he also was in uniform, as a Major-General, and a moment after he came down they drove hastily away. As soon as they were out of sight, I dressed, and went down stairs ; none but the inferior ser-

vants were stirring at this early hour, and, tying on a large bonnet, I wandered about in the plantations till breakfast-time.

The form of Montague, habited as I had recently beheld him, still floated in my imagination; and, utterly unable to detach him from my thoughts, I sent my portfolio to the temple, as a pretext for absenting myself from the Aylmers, and lingered in perfect solitude, till, the dinner hour approaching, it became time for me to think of returning to the house. On this day there was no company expected; but a neighbouring clergyman and his son, a young Oxonian, having accidentally paid us a morning visit, the former of whom was a skilful chess-player, a game in which Lady Carloline decidedly excelled, Mrs. Aylmer purposely detained them to dine, that she might form a party for my mother, at her favourite amusement. We had waited long after the hour fixed for their return

to dinner, and Mrs. Aylmer, who, on other occasions, could not calmly brook delay, was Patience personified, and still kept her temper, supposing they were detained by the heavy business of the day. The weather was oppressively warm, scarcely a breeze was stirring, and we were sitting with the windows thrown open, when Ellen Aylmer, who was in the garden, suddenly called out, that her uncle was coming on horseback. He rode slowly round into the stable-yard, and, a moment after, Mrs. Aylmer was sent for out of the room. She did not return till we were summoned into the dining-parlour, and when she came back again, I perceived that she looked flurried; her countenance wore an appearance of uneasiness; but, supposing that some trifling domestic accident had disturbed her, none inquired into the cause, and we went immediately to dinner. The General appeared fatigued, and by no means disposed to talk; he

complained of the head-ache, and sent his plate away untouched. Dinner had passed without any mention of Montague, when Lady Carloraine, addressing the General, said, "I thought, Sir, we were to have Lord Montague with us to-day? He promised last evening, I think, to return."

"He did, Madam," replied he, "but he has, unfortunately, met with an accident which has prevented him."

I listened with alarm, and was on the point of exclamation, when the curiosity of Lady Carloraine supplied us with information.

"I hope not a serious one?"

"Serious, certainly," said the General, "but I hope not dangerous, though it is, undoubtedly, very alarming."

The desert was upon the table, and I was serving some strawberries, when the General made this reply; the plate dropped from my hand—a sudden chillness came over me, and Mrs. Aylmer, per-

ceiving me change colour, attributed it to the strong scent of a water-melon, placed before me, and, ordering it from the table, directed Margaret Aylmer, who was sitting nearer the window, to change seats with me immediately. The General, however, was not so easily deceived; he readily saw that something more than the scent of the water melon had discomposed me; and, though he made no remark for some minutes, he observed me with attention. I felt too much alarmed to heed his scrutiny; while my mother, struck with my pale looks, anxiously urged me to leave the table; but, dreading to lose a syllable respecting Montague, I endeavoured to laugh away my fears, and resolutely refused, assuring her that I was perfectly recovered now that the melon was removed. Our visitors were abstemious, and the General, contrary to his usual custom, in no humour for wine. On this evening, as was frequently the case

in very warm weather, when there was no particular company, we remained in the dining-room, the windows of which, shaded by deep Venetians, and looking upon the river, beautifully winding round the foot of the lawn, rendered it cooler than any other apartment in the house. The church clock had struck nine, and the shades of evening were gradually deepening into dusk, when a gentleman on horseback rode hastily up the avenue, and stopping at the hall door, the General, espying him, instantly rose, and quitted the room; he remained absent about a quarter of an hour, but, at length returning, he introduced the stranger, who accompanied him, as Mr. H——. The very name of this gentleman seemed the herald of danger! A sick feeling pervaded my heart, and I felt ready to faint with apprehension, as the General slightly announced him, and then, retiring to a distant window, talked in a low voice with him apart.

Not a syllable distinctly fell from either; but the visible uneasiness of the General, and the restless anxiety with which he occasionally listened at the windows, prepared me for something more alarming than he had yet chosen to avow, although I did not dare to trust myself with an inquiry. It was now nearly ten o'clock; the tea equipage was sent away, and Lady Carloline and our visitor were deeply engaged at chess, when the sound of approaching wheels caught my ear; the General instantly rushed to the window, and a moment after a carriage came in sight. It wound slowly round the lawn, and, alive or dead, I felt certain that it contained Montague; and, fainting almost with terror, I pertinaciously grasped the window-frame to sustain my shaking limbs, determined, at all events, to know the worst that had befallen him. The instant the carriage stopped, Mr. H—— left the room; the door was opened, and the step silently

let down : an officer, and a gentleman in plain clothes, alighted from it, and carefully assisted in lifting out Montague, who, pale and apparently lifeless, was carried into the hall. His eyes were closed, and his colour quite gone. He was wrapped in a loose military cloak, slightly bound round him with his sash, which, accidentally opening, as they carried him into the house, discovered his dress frightfully stained with blood. I know not how I supported this scene—my heart died within me, my lips quivered, and my whole frame underwent such a soul-sickening revulsion, that, had I not instinctively caught the arm of the General, who was watching beside me, I must inevitably have fallen upon the floor. It was nearly dark, and the candles, placed on the chess table, served only to enlighten that part of the room ; but, as their faint light fell obliquely upon us, the General beheld me with the hue of death upon my countenance.

Deception, at this moment, was of no avail, it was beyond my efforts to attempt it; for the inmost feelings of my heart were involuntarily betrayed to him, and, commiserating the situation in which he now beheld me, he tenderly supported me without uttering any remark. I had yet sufficient recollection to desire that he should be the only witness of my agitation, and, grasping his hand, as he would have moved for assistance, I silently implored his stay. The motion was simple, but it was nevertheless expressive; the General perfectly understood my feelings, and reaching a glass of water from the side-board, he remained at the window, holding me in his arms, in perfect silence, till the fresh breeze from the river, and a copious flood of tears, in some measure relieved me; then, affectionately pressing my hand, he left me and went to Montague.

This scene passed entirely unobserved by the rest of the party. Deeply engaged

over their protracted game at chess, Miss Aylmers and the young Oxonian were anxiously watching Lady Carloline and her antagonist, and Montague's arrival was known only to Mrs. Aylmer, who, upon a signal from the General, had instantly left the room, to superintend his removal to his apartment. We saw nothing more of Mr. H——, or the General, for the remainder of the evening: the former returned to town an hour after midnight, and the General passed the night in the apartment of his friend. Mrs. Aylmer, alarmed at the danger which threatened him, was silent and uneasy; she scarcely spoke when she returned, and gave us little information as to the nature of his accident, though the General had previously told us that he feared his arm was broken: he forbore, however, to say more, and it was not until our visitors were gone, and we had retired for the night, that I learned from our attendant the real ex-

tent of Montague's danger. His arm was indeed broken, but this was the least dangerous part of the affair.—In returning from Swinley, where the troops were reviewed, and where, fatigued by the heat, he had quitted his charger and resumed his curricule, he had passed some of the regiments on their return from the ground. The spirited horses which he drove were young in harness, and being far from temperate, and probably unused to military music, they had taken fright at the fluttering of the colours, and still more terrified by the glancing elevation of the cymbals in the band, had plunged forward with a rapidity that left his grooms far behind. Montague kept his reins with unshaken firmness, and might have succeeded in checking their career, but, as they cleared the road, with the flying carriage at their heels, a small bridge impeded their progress, and darting across the turnpike road with astonishing velocity, he was thrown from the

carriage by the violence of the shock, and in a few moments taken up for dead. Completely stunned by the fall, he was for some time apparently lifeless; but being let blood, animation at length returned. His arm was slightly fractured, but the danger which more immediately threatened him was from a deep and frightful wound in his side, made on the cicatrice of one which he had formerly received on the Continent. This wound had been attended with considerable danger: he had suffered very severely from its critical situation; and, after a confinement of many months, his health had been with difficulty restored by the greatest professional skill; and it was not without the utmost alarm, that the General, who had been detained by the King at Swinley, followed him to Windsor the instant he knew of the accident. Medical assistance had been already obtained; but the General, having previously dispatched an express to

Mr. H——, gave orders for his being removed to Richmond; and, fearful that some premature reports might reach us, he came forward to prepare for his reception.

I passed a wretched night; unable to think of rest, I paced my chamber during its continuance, and, eager to learn the opinion of Mr. H——, I waited for morning with the most agonizing anxiety. He came to Richmond at an early hour, and having passed some time with his patient, he came in to breakfast with us, before he returned to town. He was evidently unwilling to say much upon the subject; and I augured from his manner that Montague, whom he described as highly fevered, was in imminent danger. I could scarcely command my feelings during this miserable day, but fearing to lose the knowledge of the most trivial circumstance relating to him, I compelled myself to pass it in the presence of the family, though the

sensations I endured, at times, nearly suffocated me. Mr. H—— regularly visited him twice every day: though far from being out of danger, his senses were restored, and Mrs. Aylmer had been permitted to see him; when, on the morning of the fifth day, some alarming change, as it appeared, had taken place; for the General, who had himself sat up with him during the night, rang his bell violently for assistance before day-break, and amidst the confusion which instantly ensued, I heard a messenger dispatched for Mr. H——, without delay. That gentleman was absent when the messenger left town, but, alarmed at the summons, he soon followed him to Richmond. Some time elapsed before he left his patient; at length he came down stairs, thoughtful, and evidently much displeased. To Mrs. Aylmer's inquiries he was unwilling to reply, but, pressed by her entreaties, to satisfy her mind, he reluctantly stated that an alarming

circumstance had taken place during the night, and that Lord Montague's danger was considerably increased: he was unavoidably compelled to leave him, and return to London, by a case of equal moment, but he urged and entreated that the house might be kept perfectly quiet, for that the life of his patient now rested solely upon the observance of this caution. Mrs. Aylmer was overpowered by this afflicting intelligence; but to describe my sufferings is impossible. Early in the evening he came again, and having remained some hours in Montague's apartment, I learned, with increased terror, that it was become necessary for him to pass the night there. Language cannot paint the agonies I underwent; under this last blow my fortitude wholly sunk, and my resolution entirely deserted me: if I essayed to speak, the words died upon my lips, and now it was that Lady Carloline first became aware of the mental misery I en-

dured.—Shocked beyond expression at this discovery, made too at such a time, my mother studiously forebore all comment; but, in her increased cares, I plainly read her knowledge of what was passing in my mind: I was assured, too, that the General was in possession of my secret, for the fatherly tenderness of his manner, since the night when the sight of Montague, dead or dying as I then believed him, had betrayed me, left me not a doubt upon the subject; but, wholly absorbed by his impending danger, I gave not a thought to any circumstance but what concerned him, and remained for hours listening to the footsteps in his apartment, or counting the moments till Mr. H—— should return. The mournful stillness of death seemed to reign throughout the house; the servants crept cautiously on tiptoe through the apartments, and scarcely a whisper broke the silence of our melancholy meetings. I could no longer hide my sufferings

from the commiserating eyes of my pitying mother, and even the prying Aylmers were also become aware of them. Montague's approaching death absorbed every faculty of my soul; I believed that I should not long survive his dissolution, and their observation gave me no sort of concern. A fortnight, a miserable fortnight, passed in this manner, before Mr. H——, to whom alone I looked for comfort, upon whose accents my very existence seemed to hang, gave us any hopes of his even distant recovery. At last the fever gradually began to subside, and his wound slowly assumed a more favourable aspect. After an interval of another week he grew still better, and when Mr. H—— at length pronounced him, though still suffering, yet nearly out of danger, I could have fallen at his feet and deified him for the news.

As my spirits revived, the sensitive delicacy of my feelings revived also; and I began to perceive with pain, from the

significant glances of the Aylmers, that the sufferings of my mind had not passed unobserved. Engrossed by Montague's danger, and compelled to silence by its absolute necessity, they had hitherto refrained from remark upon the subject, but now that the danger was past, and the certainty of his recovery had unchained their loquacity, this temporary restraint was at an end, and again they broke forth into skittishness and folly. My original dislike of them returned with added force, but particularly towards Margaret, who, on the day upon which Montague's convalescence had been announced to us, provoked me into the warmest expression of anger.—During dinner the conversation turned upon the recovery of our invalid, and to some good humoured jokes of the General's on our faded roses, which applied to the whole party alike, Miss Margaret saucily replied, by fixing her eyes full on my face, and repeating,

with marked emphasis, the well-known answer of Viola :

“ She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,
Feed on her damask cheek.”

However blanched my roses might have been before, they were sufficiently glowing then, for the colour mounted instantly into my face, and, irritated at the impertinence of an allusion which rivetted the eyes of all the servants on my countenance, I threw on her a glance of indignation, and the word “ Insolent ! ” escaped me. Lady Carloraine looked amazed ; Mrs. Aylmer seemed hurt at my evident discomposure ; and the General, with more displeasure than I had yet seen him assume, angrily insisted on her apologizing for her rudeness. The young lady complied, though with a very ill grace, and muttering an apology, which I received in haughty silence, peace was again restored ; though

the cold civility of my manner, and the pert negligence of her own, proved that the circumstance, if forgiven, was at least not forgotten.

CHAPTER VII.

WE had now been six weeks at Richmond: Lady Carloline, stimulated by uneasiness upon my account, began to think of leaving it; and, perceiving that I still shrunk from her confidence, she feared to wound my feelings by entering at present upon the subject, and determined to announce her intention of going immediately into Devonshire.

Some days afterwards Lord Montague was permitted to come down stairs for the first time; Mr. H—— had promised that he should join us for a few hours towards evening, on condition that he would not fatigue himself by conversation. He informed us in the morning, that he should that day indulge us with a visit from his patient, and, though prepared for the interview, I felt agitated

beyond expression. Montague came down when the tea equipage was brought in, wrapped in a loose surtout, and looking dreadfully pale from the loss of blood which he had sustained; he appeared but the shadow of his former self; and his sunk cheek and hollow eye evidently bespoke the severity of his personal sufferings. My mother cordially shook hands with him upon his entrance; Mrs. Aylmer, though she had seen him frequently, was excessively shocked at the alteration now so visible in his wasted form, and sobbed audibly over him, whilst I, wholly unable to restrain my tears, turned silently away to conceal them.—The girls began to rattle away as usual; but the General, calling them to order, prohibited his talking to them at all. Montague smilingly complied with these conditions, and saying that he wanted air, he changed his seat, and languidly crossed the room to the window where I was placed. He wore his

broken arm still supported in a sling, and, affected beyond utterance at the change in his appearance, I wanted power to articulate the welcome my heart hailed him with. Tears still trembled in my eyes, as I placed a seat for him near the window, and, throwing open the sash, which looked upon the river, his wan countenance was lighted with an expression of tender gratitude: a slight shower had recently fallen, and cleared the sultry atmosphere; the fresh breeze, which the wind brought from the water, and the cool scent of the roses, blooming in clusters round the windows, appeared to revive him; a faint colour again tinged his cheek, and he declared that he already felt considerably better.

In the course of the evening Lady Carloraine mentioned her projected departure, and, addressing the General, she added, “And now that I have the happiness to see my Lord Montague re-

covering, and my inestimable friend again at ease, I must decide upon taking my leave of you ; my Devonshire neighbours will think that I have quite deserted them."

" However that may be," answered Mrs. Aylmer, smiling : " you must not yet *desert* me ; do not think of your Devonshire neighbours at present, I cannot yet part with you ; besides," she added gaily, " I want Lady Frances to superintend my nursery."

The colour rose in my cheeks ; Montague turned his eyes upon me with an anxious look, whilst, bending mine upon the ground, I answered somewhat ironically, " My dear Madam, while you have such able assistants in your amiable nieces, I may readily be spared ; my absence, I am sure, cannot be even felt."

Montague, I fancied, looked hurt at this silly speech ; but the glance of disdain, which he unconsciously threw on the Aylmers, who were tittering over

some whispered witticism in a distant corner, in some measure seemed to contradict my assertion. He did not sit up late, for the General, all anxiety, hurried him away, long before he wished to retire; and, fearful of the ill effects of exertion, he would scarcely suffer him to speak to us at all, but promising that he should remain longer the next evening, and be allowed to venture out upon the lawn, he positively insisted on his now retiring to his apartment, and going immediately to bed. Montague reluctantly obeyed his commands, and silently lifting my hand to his lips, as I opened the door for his departure, he bowed a good night to the rest, and retired to his room. This single incident, trivial as it appeared, unconsciously revived the sweetest feelings of my soul. Hope, flattering hope, again dawned in my bosom; but unable to reconcile the reviving tenderness of his manner with his positive declaration of his attach-

ment to another, I passed the night in re-tracing his every look and movement, or in vainly conjecturing the import of feelings, which seemed to influence his present conduct; and, though I slept not, these hours were the most tranquil of any I had passed for many weeks.

On the following morning the mystery was solved, for, as I arose from the breakfast-table to go to my apartment, Lady Carloraine presented me with the following letter, an irrefragable proof of

“ Silent working Heaven, surprising oft
The lonely heart with unexpected good.”

Which the General, having purposely detained her when we separated for the night, had delivered to her the preceding evening, accompanied by a long and explanatory conversation..

“ TO LADY CARLORAINÉ.

“ Your Ladyship will probably be astonished that, scarcely risen from the bed.

of death, and still languishing under the effects of severe indisposition, I should select from all others a moment like the present, for an avowal of such a nature as this letter will convey to you; but considerations, which I need not now intrude upon your attention, have decided my resolution to delay it no longer, but to throw myself at once upon the indulgence of her most dear to me. To tell your Ladyship that I admire Lady Frances Delamere must be wholly unnecessary; all who know her must do justice to her merit, and *my* heart has long since acknowledged the claims of her superior worth. I cannot entirely divest myself of the belief that Lady Frances was once aware of the strong impression she had made upon me; for, ingenuous in all her actions, the approbation with which she received the only attentions I at that period felt authorized to devote to her encouraged my hopes; but painful and unavoidable ne-

cessity then kept me silent: and it was not until I had been for months chained to the death-bed of a dying brother, that I felt myself at liberty to offer her a heart, not perhaps entirely unworthy of her acceptance. Judge, then, of my feelings, when, released from my mournful task, I learned that Lady Frances was actually affianced to another ! Doubting, yet scarcely daring to doubt, whether this was in reality the case, I flew to London in despair ; there the bitter truth was universally confirmed to me, and, through the medium of a friend who, commiserating my anxiety, fully ascertained the fact, I was informed, upon the authority of Lord Carloraine himself, that *his* approbation had sanctioned her engagement. Smarting under the agonies of unexpected disappointment, I instantly quitted London, and buried myself at a distance from it, in the active duties of my profession ; but private affairs having un-

avoidably recalled me, I again, and, I confess, most unwillingly, became an inmate of the same roof with Lady Frances. Stung with resentment at the ease with which I believed myself sacrificed to the triumph of her new conquest, I met, and treated her with marked indifference; yes, Madam, I have stabbed her to the heart, by the deliberate insolence of neglect, and, I am yet hardy enough to demand her pardon for the past.

I loved Lady Frances with enthusiasm! I love her so still. I have been the victim of misrepresentation, and the veil of error is withdrawn when it is possibly too late. Lady Frances has *not*, however, driven me from her heart. Of this fact I have been assured, though I dare not yet trust myself with the flattering belief. Will she then accept my justification? Will she accord me her forgiveness? And, though fate may, for the present, place her beyond my reach,

will she, forgetful of my errors, and, remembering only my affection, consent to gild with happiness the future years of her devoted

MONTAGUE."

The language of adulation was no stranger to my ears: I had been repeatedly assured, that every charm that could dignify human nature concentrated in my possession, but the distinguishing regard of Montague alone taught me the consciousness of superior worth. His avowal of affection spoke the genuine sentiments of his noble heart; and over this rich gift, for which I would have bartered an empire, I wept for hours; and, lifting up my soul in gratitude to my Creator, I passed the morning in silent thankfulness on my knees.

Some hours afterwards Lady Caroline came to my room. "My child," said she, tenderly folding me to her

heart, "give me your confidence." I could not answer her, but tears of transport streamed from my eyes, as I buried my face on her bosom. "I need not ask your thoughts, my Frances," said she, "I read them fully; and now, take mine. That letter contains the proudest triumph of your mother's life! Perfect felicity is beyond the reach of mortals; but she who is destined to be the wife of Montague will attain the summit of human happiness! That such may be *your* fate, my child, and that I may live long enough to behold the fondest wish of my heart realized in your union, is all I have now to pray for on this side the grave."

I was too much agitated to thank her as she deserved; and my mother, aware that my own thoughts were my best companions, soon quitted my apartment, and went down stairs.

The General, it appeared, had, in the course of their correspondence, early

gained the confidence of Montague on the subject of his attachment; but looking forward to the hourly expected event of his brother's death, he had restricted him from naming it even to Mrs. Aylmer. He had afterwards become acquainted with my reported engagement to Lord Robert Spencer, and all doubt of it being removed by Lord Carloraine's apparent sanction, he came unwillingly to Richmond, at the pressing instance of the General, with a firm determination to conquer his ill-placed regard. The General himself was still doubtful of its truth, and would willingly have investigated the matter more closely; but Montague, relying on the veracity of Lord Carloraine, gave it his perfect credence, and absolutely prohibited all renewal of the subject. The distance I had assumed towards him, and the confusion I had even betrayed at the mention of Lord Robert, confirmed him in his belief, but operated exactly the re-

verse upon the General; for, better acquainted with my disposition, he felt convinced that a misconception existed somewhere; and when he beheld my alarm at the first hint of Montague's danger, he doubted whether the affianced bride of Lord Robert could feel thus powerfully for another. From this moment he observed me attentively, and when he shortly after beheld my inmost soul laid open to him, he hailed it as an omen of the purest felicity, should Montague be fortunately restored to convalescence. Full of his discovery the General was impatient to impart it to his friend, and eagerly embracing the earliest opportunity, and possibly somewhat inconsiderate of its consequences, he told him all he knew. Seated by his bed-side, in the deepest silence of the night, he did not hesitate to affirm to him that our attachment was mutual; and, while Montague, already highly fevered from bodily anguish, listened

with a beating heart to his recital, the delighted General recounted every circumstance which had fallen under his observation.

Montague received this communication with transport. Unable to articulate, he grasped the General's hand in grateful silence; but the strong emotion he underwent had nearly proved fatal to him; for the agitation of his weakened frame instantly occasioned his wound to re-open, and a most alarming effusion of blood ensuing, the General, in the utmost consternation, dispatched an express for Mr. H——. He came, as I have before stated, expeditiously from alarm, and with difficulty succeeded in stopping the hemorrhage. Montague was dreadfully exhausted by it, and Mr. H——, exceedingly displeased at his having been exposed to such agitation, although the General sorrowfully assured him it was from a circumstance of the most gratifying nature, angrily cleared

the room of every person but the nurse ; and, sending the General himself down stairs in his penitentials, he ordered the windows to be darkened, and positively forbade all visitors, or even the sound of voices, near his apartment. Quiet, entire quiet, was arbitrarily insisted on, and Montague implicitly complied with his injunctions. This ample leisure was congenial to his mind, and amidst the silence which now enveloped him, he calmly endeavoured to still the beatings of his anxious heart, and passed these tranquil hours in mentally arranging the letter, which, as soon as it was permitted him, he addressed to Lady Carloraine.

For myself, I vainly tried to compose my mind after the perusal of this avowal. I strove to collect my scattered thoughts without avail, and dreading the scrutinizing looks of the Aylmers, I excused myself from dinner. In the evening, I knew that I must inevitably meet Montague. I felt also, that every thought

of my heart was become known to him, and I wanted courage to encounter the tender glance that now awaited me; certain, however, that if I staid in my apartment all day, the interview must, notwithstanding, at last take place, I summoned a sort of desperate resolution to my aid, and, whilst they were still in the dining-room, ventured down stairs.

Mrs. Aylmer was the accredited Lady Bountiful of the vicinity. She personally superintended the preparation, as well as distribution, of her bounty to her humble neighbours; and the day being unusually favourable, she ordered all hands into the garden, to gather roses for her still-room. Her nieces ran for their garden bonnets. Mrs. Aylmer, and the General, with Lady Carloraine upon his arm, were already in the walk, and I was busily seeking my parasol, which I had somewhere mislaid, when the door opened, and Montague walked into the room. I felt as if rooted to the

spot; transfixed by his sudden appearance, I wanted power to move a step; my courage failed me, and I trembled like a leaf, when Montague, his mild eyes beaming with ineffable affection, approached me, and grasped my hand with graceful tenderness: for an instant neither of us uttered a syllable, his intelligent eyes alone spoke the feelings of his soul; but at length, softly articulating, "*my own Frances!*" he drew me gently to his heart, and, entirely overpowered by emotion and surprise, I hid my face on his shoulder, and burst into tears. Next to the moment which has since united our destiny, this was, unquestionably, the happiest of my life; and, even at this distant period, my eyes glisten with tears at the endearing recollection. This interesting interview lasted a considerable time; but, at length, we remembered our friends in the garden. Montague was still extremely weak, his languid frame could with diffi-

culty sustain itself, as, supported by my arm, he, for the first time, entered the garden. The Aylmers were busy amongst the rose-bushes, at a distance; but they no sooner perceived him in the walk, than, almost shouting with surprise, they instantly joined us. Mrs. Aylmer, aware of the present state of our feelings, soon hastened them back to their task, and consigning her interesting invalid to my peculiar care, we walked slowly round the lawn, till we were summoned in to tea.

From this hour, all unnecessary reserve was at an end. Montague already knew that my existence hung on his welfare, and disguise, in this instance, would have amounted to dissimulation; I disdained even to affect it to him, and never in the habit of forming romantic female friendships, he progressively became the chosen friend of my heart, and a fortnight, a delightful fortnight fled, in the happiest intercourse of acknowledged re-

gard ; a regard founded solely on principles, where

“ Perfect esteem, and sympathy of soul,
Thought meeting thought, and boundless confidence,
Still rendered love secure.”

Lady Carloraine felt scarcely less happy than myself ; from the first hour of our acquaintance, she had considered Montague as a model of human perfection, and she now sang forth his praises without reserve : she already regarded him as the son of her proudest hopes, and certain that the explanation, to which in all their conversations he had anxiously alluded, could only redound to his honour, she positively prohibited all mention of it until his health should be sufficiently restored to try the pure air of Devonshire, whither it was shortly settled he should accompany the General, and Mrs. Aylmer, for a few weeks during the summer. All thoughts of joining his regiment were for the present laid aside ; for myself, completely happy

in the endearing privilege, now exclusively mine, of being ever at his side, and administering to his comfort, of supporting him upon my arm, as we slowly strolled about the gardens, or of soothing his languid hours by the sweetest strains of my neglected harp, I felt not a wish beyond it. I had no desire to expedite the disclosure he so anxiously wished to enter upon; and wholly content with his regard, Montague, unpossessed of the brilliant attributes which even then adorned his name, would still have been the object of my heart's proudest selection.

“ Mine was the joy his hopes and fears to share,
To scatter roses round the brow of care!
To sooth with cheering smiles his hours of woe,
And bid affection's torch for ever glow.”

But Montague was still not the gifted hero of romance! In these days of early courtship, he neither poured forth the sorrows of his soul in soft sonnets, or elegantly enacted the “*sighing Romeo*”

at my feet, but disdaining the affectation of mawkish fondness, he invariably preserved the manly dignity of his character. Glorifying in his partial approbation, I desired only to *deserve* it ; and dreading lest, upon more matured acquaintance, I should sink in his estimation, I hourly studied to improve, where I even fancied myself defective.

A short time after this happy *eclaircissement* had taken place, Lady Aylmer, probably learning from her daughters that all hopes of success in their designs upon Montague were at an end, sent for the young ladies to accompany her to Cheltenham ; and, left more to ourselves, we scarcely perceived, much less regretted, their absence. Time however wore away ; and Lord Rathfarnham's family, having in the interim arrived in England, had gone suddenly into Yorkshire, on receiving the intelligence of Lord Northallerton, Lady Rathfarnham's father, being dangerously ill ; but, in ex-

pectation of their speedy return, Lady Carloraine felt unwilling to prolong our visit farther, and at length fixed the day for our departure into Devonshire. It had been previously agreed, that as soon as Montague could bear the journey our friends should rejoin us; for sea-bathing had been recommended as absolutely necessary for his perfect recovery; and this promise reiterated, we at last bade them adieu.

We travelled slowly upon account of Lady Carloraine; but never did the face of nature wear such an interesting aspect! The season was delightful, and my bosom at peace; and my mother, almost as enthusiastically attached to Montague as myself, fondly congratulated me on the possession of his valued heart, and looked forward to our anticipated happiness with delight.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ August and hoary o’er the sloping dale
The gothic abbey rear’d its sculptur’d towers.”

“ Where pious beadsmen, from the world retir’d,
In blissful visions wing’d their souls to Heaven ;
With future days their holy transports fir’d,
They wept their erring days, and were forgiven.”

WILTON Abbey, the maternal seat of Lady Carloraine, had originally been a monastery of the Cistercian Order ; but having, upon the dissolution of religious houses about the year 1539, during the reign of our Eighth Henry, been granted by that monarch to one of her Ladyship’s ancestors, it had remained in the possession of his descendants till the present crisis, a period of upwards of 260 years. It was a venerable gothic structure of the twelfth century, situated upon a bold eminence, and proudly overlooking an extensive valley, which widen-

ing into distance imperceptibly lost itself in the park and plantations which on all sides, but on that towards the sea, surrounded it;

“ Majestic woods, of every vigorous green,
Stage above stage, high waving o'er the hills,
Which to the far horizon wide diffus'd
Spread boundless, deep immensity of shade.”

And sloping gradually down to the shore, presented a fine view of the sea, stretching along the coast of Devonshire, at a distance of about a mile and a half from the abbey. To this beautiful place I had ever been much attached. It had been the constant residence of Lady Carloline from my years of earliest infancy; and here my mind had been strongly imbued with the purest principles of morality, and animated to their practice by the example of her suffering virtue. In the neighbourhood of Wilton Abbey, Lady Carloline's annual departure was invariably felt with regret, and her return hailed with delight; for, contrary to the

habits of our higher orders of nobility, she did not bury herself in the haughty seclusion of her stately residence, but kept up an occasional visiting intercourse with her neighbours; amongst whom however, Dr. Grey, our old and valued acquaintance, claimed the pre-eminence.

This worthy divine held another valuable living in the neighbourhood of Bath, where he generally passed the winter months; but as duly as the royal birthday dispatched the world of fashion to the distant watering places, so duly it brought Dr. Grey back to welcome his patroness. Though at a distance from the gay world, time rarely hung heavily upon our hands, and the casual engagements which our accustomed interchange of civility gave birth to naturally occupied the first weeks after our return; but about the beginning of September we began to hope for our visitors. The journey depending upon Montague's health, we were not apprized of the

exact day of their arrival; and I was one evening absent, as was sometimes my habit, wandering amongst the cliffs that overhung the beach, when I fancied that I heard a voice familiar to my ear, checking the shrill barking of a dog as it bounded along the shore. I paused a moment; but all again was still, except the echoes of the baying animal reverberating amongst the cliffs; and the evening drawing in, I was bending my steps homeward, when suddenly turning round an angle of the rocks, at a short distance from the Abbey, Montague stood before me! I uttered an exclamation of joyful surprise, as placing my arm within his own he complained of my protracted absence. They had arrived a few minutes after my departure for a stroll; and Montague having waited till his patience was exhausted, inquired my usual route, and at length came in search of me himself. He had been wandering amongst the cliffs for some time

before we met ; and eager to welcome our beloved friends, we mended our pace, and soon reached the abbey.

Mrs. Aylmer and my mother had been companions from infancy. She had passed much of her early life in occasional visits in Devonshire, and to her all was of course familiar ; but to the General, who, engaged by his military avocations, had never before been at the abbey, every view was new and interesting ; and as he gazed with admiration on the beauty of the surrounding scenery, Lady Carloraine listened to his remarks with the laudable pride of ancestry glowing warmly round her heart ; whilst I, occupied mostly with Montague, examined his wan countenance with alarm, and anxiously questioned him on the progress of his recovery. The fine air of Devonshire speedily accelerated it ; and by the time he had been with us a week, his strength and colour visibly returned.

In a morning we went on short airings,

to show our visitors every scene worth their notice in the neighbourhood. In an evening, arm in arm, we strolled leisurely about the park, or down to the shore, and Montague's health was daily improving under this regimen. One evening, when we had rambled alone to a favourite seat amongst the cliffs, he entered more fully into the subject, which had long weighed so heavily upon his mind, and which, as he told me, since we parted at Richmond and he had found more leisure to reflect upon it, had cost him many hours of anxiety and uneasiness. "The General," said he continuing the subject, "has in part apprized Lady Carloraine of the unpleasant arrangements I was necessitated to adopt on the death of my brother; but with his mind more immediately filled by existing circumstances, I almost fear that he has neglected to inform her of their actual extent. Had I at that period entertained even the most distant presentiment of the felicity reserved for me, I

should undoubtedly have acted very differently ; but convinced of the fallacy of my hopes with respect to yourself, and assured that you were actually pledged to another, I fettered myself with engagements from which I cannot now escape. My brother's imprudence, and the seductions of evil example, led him into excesses of which rational minds have no conception, and which I still shudder to think of since they ended in the melancholy destruction of their victim ! Deeply involved in a career of dissipation, he encumbered his property to an amazing extent ; and having lost the power, or at least the inclination, to reflect on his errors, he became the prey of every needy adventurer that chose to court his favour, or revel in the spoils of his property. At seventeen the death of our father placed him in the unlimited possession of the Beauchamp estates, left to him unconditionally by the partiality of his grandmother. He had then recently entered at Cambridge,

and while he remained there, his horses, his equipages, his entertainments, and his mistresses, added to every species of profusion that such a profligate association could possibly devise, squandered away a fortune, which for ages had formed the principal support of the Beauchamp honours, and when at one and twenty he came into the enjoyment of our family estates, he was already involved many thousand pounds in debt. Naturally impetuous, his extravagance knew no bounds ; and disregarding the admonitions of his guardians, who till now had preserved some sort of authority over him, he plunged deeper into new schemes of dissipation, and the eccentricities, not to say vices, of which he was occasionally guilty, served to astonish the most dashing and even the most daring of his contemporaries. To the early lessons of Dr. Carlton, and the paternal cares of General Aylmer, I am alone indebted for my escape from the contagion of his example, and

never while I exist can I adequately repay the obligation ! I will pass over these years of error," continued Montague, " and hasten to the period, when dangerous indisposition restored him, though too late, to the possession of his thinking powers. *Then*, nor till then, did he begin to feel the follies of a life visibly hastening to its close, and bitterly lamenting the course of vice in which he had persevered, he hourly implored the pardon of his offended God, and besought me never to abandon him as long as life should be spared to him. When I left England some few years before, to make my first campaign under the command of General Aylmer, Beauchamp then recently become Lord Montague, was, I think without exception, one of the finest youths that the light of heaven shone upon ! His figure was elegance personified ; his countenance was striking ; his very look was eloquent : but when, four years afterwards, I returned

from Flanders, and beheld him the victim of intemperance and disease, the melancholy change struck my heart with agony, and I felt convinced that he was sinking rapidly to his tomb. His fine form was become quite emaciated, his limbs wasted with sickness, and, mentally alive to all the horrors of his situation, he shrunk from the pity of his former dissolute associates; and a lingering decline affording him ample leisure to make his peace with Heaven, sincere repentance has, I fervently hope, expiated the errors of his transient life! Had he lived, I am persuaded that he would have totally abjured all intimacy with his former connexions, but his recovery was early pronounced impossible, and fully aware of this painful truth, he passed the short interval that was yet permitted him, in penitence and prayer. During this awful period I never left him: I watched for weeks by his bed-side, listening to the agonizing self accusations of his re-

morse, and never once quitted him till his dissolution had taken place, and the last duties which he had solemnly required from me were faithfully performed. Beauchamp breathed his last in *my arms.*” Montague paused: a slight struggle for a moment impeded his utterance, but, brushing away the tears from his dimmed eye, he shortly proceeded, whilst affected by his melancholy recital my tears flowed profusely.

“ My succession to the family honours, and the incredible sums for which, as soon as his death became known, bills were hourly presented to me, rendered an immediate inspection into his affairs highly necessary. They were yet under examination, when I flew to London, to read my destiny in your reception of me. At this melancholy crisis I learned the failure of all my hopes! Torn with previous uneasiness, and smarting under the pangs of unlooked-for disappointment, I shortly

returned to Bath, and the professional scrutiny into Beauchamp's affairs being ended, I learned with astonishment, that during the few years which he had held possession of the estates, he had entirely dissipated the immense fortune of his grandmother; and had actually died, at the early age of six and twenty, more than a hundred and forty thousand pounds in debt! Distracted by my own private sufferings, and the embarrassing situation I was then placed in as his successor, I sketched a hasty plan for the liquidation of his debts, and assigning over the entire rental of the estates, till their discharge should be completed, and which, computed from that period, will occupy the entire product for seven years, I prepared to content myself, as I had hitherto done, with the slender patrimony of a younger brother; and my fleeting schemes of wedded happiness being entirely at an end, I directed my agent to break up the expensive

household in Cavendish Square, and let the house upon a lease, till the expiration of my pecuniary engagements. You, now that you are acquainted with my actual situation, may form some idea of my feelings, when I found how deeply I had been deceived ! General Aylmer, satisfied that our mutual happiness had been sacrificed to misconception, urged me to remove all doubts upon the subject, by instantly stating the truth, and offering myself to your acceptance ; and without perhaps sufficiently reflecting upon the consequences of this proceeding, I have thoughtlessly involved you, my Frances, in the evils of my fate ; for could you at this moment be content to share it, I could not legally command even the humble home I might offer you."

Montague ceased speaking. My tears streamed afresh as he concluded, for of the extent of his embarrassments I had not indeed been aware ; and, dreading nothing upon earth so much as our

separation, the painful prospect which his communication exhibited entirely subdued me. Montague hung over me with expressions of the tenderest affection: he execrated the deception which had reduced us to this dilemma: and though he bitterly reproached himself for having involved me in the inconveniences of his destiny, his bright eye beamed with transport at this unequivocal proof of my regard. Totally unhinged by our conversation, I added but little upon our return to the hilarity of the evening. At supper I sent my plate away untouched; and Lady Carloraine readily discerning that something had discomposed me, as soon as the servants had retired, questioned Montague as to its nature. He candidly informed her of the subject of our conference, and earnestly entreated that she would allow him to explain it fully to herself. On the following morning this explanation took place in the presence of the Gene-

ral; and my mother, far more sanguine than ourselves, saw his engagements in a light somewhat different. Mercenary as she knew Lord Carloraine to be beyond all doubt, she could not yet bring herself to believe that, when the happiness of his child was to be the forfeit, he would hesitate for an instant what path to pursue.

From the hour of my birth he had never yet parted with a single guinea on my account; and as he had, on former occasions, seemed desirous of establishing me according to my rank, she fondly hoped that he would come forward with alacrity now that such an eligible alliance had presented itself, and, by portioning me in a manner adequate to my birth, remove all obstruction to our union. My mother's heart was deeply engaged in this scheme of tranquil happiness; she formed fairy plans of future comfort, and fondly arguing herself into the belief that nothing would occur to derange

them, she flattered herself that all would happen as she wished, and thus encouraged me to hopes of brighter promise. Montague however was still uneasy. He could not divest himself of the fears which pervaded him, or tranquillize his feelings whilst any doubts of Lord Carloline hung upon his mind. Our friends had now been more than a month at the abbey; and during this period, the character of Montague had gradually unfolded itself to my perfect knowledge. I studied his temper, his habits, and his opinions, with the most sedulous attention, and the result of my observation fixed him more strongly in my esteem. His manners were high, but interesting and impressive, though, from the habits of his profession, somewhat more lofty than might have been suited to an inferior situation; and although on ordinary occasions he preferred to sue, it was readily discovered that he had been born but to command. No man,

even in his happiest hour, dared venture upon an ill-timed liberty with Lord Montague, but none need be apprehensive of similar freedom from him; yet the easy grace with which he assimilated himself to the understanding of those about him successfully removed that painful consciousness of inferiority, which all persons must occasionally feel, however reluctantly they may recognise the claims of superior worth. Montague was gifted with extraordinary powers of penetration; his mind, adorned with the richest treasures of classic education, was eminently capacious, and widely embracing every object both of local and national welfare, the good of his country seemed the ruling passion of his soul. His sentiments were noble, and his conversation even upon trivial subjects instructive; I listened to him with admiration! I hung upon the “*honeyed sweetness*” of his accents with delight, for he ever gave to them the charm of

graceful elocution, and, from his lips, even trifles became interesting. In the important duties of his profession he was active and indefatigable; personal inconveniences he had invariably despised, and his constitution, though naturally strong, had been early and hardly tried by the arduous service on which he had been engaged during his voluntary participation of a Continental campaign. At a period like this, then, when still suffering under the severities of a painful indisposition, the kind cares of all around him seemed doubly grateful to his heart, and he gratefully appreciated the tranquil comforts of a home, where change of air, and the sober habits of domestic regularity, had manifestly accelerated the progress of his returning health. To the home of *his* hopes, Montague fondly led my thoughts; it formed an interesting subject of conversation in our frequent rambles upon the

sea-shore, and the tasteful decoration with which he sometimes amused himself, by planning to embellish it for my reception, when the present embargo upon his estates should expire, strengthened the grateful feeling of affection in my heart. My mother had already apprised Lord Clencorrie of this new link in her earthly chain. To the high character of Montague, though personally unknown to him, Lord Clencorrie professed himself no stranger, and, participating in our views of future happiness, he warmly congratulated me on this acknowledged addition to it. Peculiarly gratified by approbation so unequivocally expressed, Montague could not however divest himself of his anxiety to secure that of Lord Carloline; and my mother having tempted Mrs. Aylmer to prolong their stay another fortnight in Devonshire, he felt unable to endure a longer period of sus-

pense, and, taking a hasty leave of us, departed for London to present himself to my father.

Lady Carloraine had long since dropped all correspondence with the Earl, but on this momentous occasion she revived it; and making Montague the bearer of her communications to his Lordship, she announced the object of his journey, and warmly expatiating on his worth and expectation, besought him to exert himself in securing the happiness of his only child, by forwarding an alliance in every respect so unobjectionable. She stated to the Earl our mutual anxiety for his approval, and implored him, as he valued the future peace of both parties, not to withhold it. Her letter was a master-piece of affecting composition; I shed tears of tender gratitude as she partly recited to me its contents, and hoped, ardently hoped, that its effect upon my father might be propitious!

Montague reached London the next evening after his departure, and on the following morning submitted his proposals to Lord Carloline, who happened not to have left town, accompanied by the flattering recommendation of my mother, and an earnest request from himself, that the Earl would name an early hour for a personal interview upon the subject. All that day no answer was returned—the second passed, and still none arrived; but on the morning of the third, Montague received a short epistle from the Earl, apologizing for not having answered his letter before, and containing a civil but positive rejection of his proposals. Not more astonished than hurt at the laconic coldness of his reply, Montague instantly addressed a second and more explanatory letter to him; he endeavoured to ascertain the grounds of such decided rejection, and to urge him to an interview, in which he still hoped it might be possible to effect a change in his deter-

mination, by convincing him that the happiness of all parties was avowedly at stake. The Earl condescended to reply in a letter couched in terms nearly as concise as the former, "That notwithstanding Lord Montague had been so fortunate as to possess himself of the previous approbation of Lady Carloraine, upon which he sincerely congratulated him, he nevertheless considered himself also as having some right to claim a share in the disposal of his daughter, and under that impression having formed other views for the establishment of Lady Frances Delamere, he felt himself under the necessity of again, and decidedly, declining the offered honour of his Lordship's alliance."

Stung to the soul by the insolent sarcasm of this reply, Montague felt the disappointment but more strongly, from the unconscious indulgence of those sanguine hopes which my mother had almost persuaded us to entertain. He

enclosed both the letters to Lady Carloline, accompanied by her affecting appeal to his parental feelings, which the Earl had contemptuously returned with his last haughty rejection, and pleaded the deranged state of his feelings as an apology for his present inability to comment upon it ; to me he professed himself unable to write till his thoughts were more composed, and he could better decide upon the plan it was now proper to pursue.

The General, deeply interested in his happiness, could not be prevailed on to stay a day after this intelligence was received, and leaving Mrs. Aylmer to comfort us as well as she was able, he set out for London to afford Montague the consolation of his presence and advice. Lady Carloline painfully affected by a circumstance which threatened the total annihilation of our brightest prospects, and irritated beyond bearing by the conduct of Lord Carloline, could not command

her feelings to speak of it with calmness ; and convinced that his rejection of Montague's proposals arose solely from their having been previously approved of by herself, she deeply resented his barbarity in thus wantonly sacrificing the peace of his only child to the dictates of his long cherished resentment against herself. Mrs. Aylmer, who detested Lord Carloraine, vented her hatred of him in terms still less temperate ; she branded him with every opprobrious epithet that her imagination could devise, and stimulated my mother to new exertions for our future happiness. For myself, struck to the heart by this final blow to my hopes, I sunk at once under the pressure of the feelings that overwhelmed me ; I could not support even the commiserating sympathy of my mother or Mrs. Aylmer, and I fled from their observation to solitude and despair ! Alarmed at the strength of suffering under which she again beheld me sinking,

Lady Carloraine once more called exertion to her aid, and writing to Lord Clencorrie, who was still at Lord Northallerton's seat in Yorkshire, she demanded his immediate presence at Wilton Abbey. Clencorrie lost no time in obeying her hasty summons, and partly guessing its import, he left Yorkshire without delay, and before the end of the week joined us at the abbey. Rejoiced at his prompt obedience to her wishes, my mother communicated to him every circumstance which had occurred: she energetically implored him to consider Montague as the brother of his affection, and demanded his assistance for the restoration of our comfort. Clencorrie, feelingly alive to the tender charities of brotherly-love, entered with alacrity into all her wishes, and proposed instantly to set out for London accompanied by my mother, and in personal interview with Lord Carloraine, urge him to retract, or at least account for, his inexplicable re-

jection of Lord Montague's proposals.— To his plea of "*other views*," Lord Clencorrie gave little credence ; and his explanation, which for reasons best known to themselves he believed the Earl would scarcely dare to refuse him, he hoped might effect a change in our favour.

This plan was no sooner resolved upon than executed, and my mother, attended by Clencorrie, departed for London, leaving Mrs. Aylmer to console me in their absence from the abbey.

During this interval I was compelled to stifle my feelings, and exert myself into some sort of society for Mrs. Aylmer, and scarcely daring to look forward to any change in the determination of Lord Carloraine, I was endeavouring to reason myself into resignation to my fate ; when late one evening, towards the end of the week, at the commencement of which they had quitted the abbey, just as we were preparing

to retire, a carriage, with post-horses, drove hastily up to the door, and a moment after Lady Carlorraine, accompanied by Montague and my brother, clasped me tenderly in her arms.

In my mother's saddened countenance I read the total failure of her embassy, and notwithstanding my lately assumed fortitude, I felt unable to articulate a syllable distinctly, while Montague pressed me silently to his heart. My mother reading my anxious looks, and readily comprehending my feelings, soon put a period to all suspense.

"My Frances," said she steadily, "from your father we have nothing to expect. As far as relates to *him*, every thing is at an end; do not however despair, even yet all may be well." But she could not a second time delude me into this belief, and convinced that every prospect of earthly happiness was now for ever vanished, I sunk into a seat, the passive image of despair!

Lady Carloraine, however, had not yet abandoned all her hopes ; she knew that till I became of age the Earl's power to prevent our marriage remained in full force ; but this interval would rapidly pass away, and having ascertained in the interview which had taken place, and which she had then determined should be the last which in this life should pass between them, that opposition to *her* wishes had been the sole cause of Montague's rejection, she did not hesitate unequivocally to declare, that she would individually sanction our union by her presence, the moment I became emancipated from the tyranny of my unnatural father.

The grand difficulty which arose in opposition to this measure still remained unmoved ; for, fettered with engagements for the liquidation of his brother's debts, some years must inevitably elapse before Montague could command an establishment suited to his rank ; but here

Lord Clencorrie exhibited the marking traits of his disposition, and, with all the high-souled generosity of his natural character, he anxiously urged Montague to accept from his friendship such pecuniary assistance as he might hereafter find necessary. General Aylmer had previously discussed the same subject with him; but, gratefully appreciating the value of their regard, the noble soul of Montague disdained even the shadow of dependance upon another, and shrunk with pain from the bare idea of interfering with the numerous claims of Lord Clencorrie's rising family, by this proffered participation in the property of his friend; he therefore gratefully, though firmly, declined the proposal, although my mother and Clencorrie repeatedly urged every argument they could devise to induce him to yield to this arrangement, when I should have completed my minority. "I will not," said he, affectionately taking my hand, as Lady

Carlorraine again went over all her arguments in vain—"I will not insult Lady Frances by the supposition of a change; she cannot change; I am convinced of her stability, and I feel no doubts of her regard.—Circumstances occurring at a time when I was utterly incapable of decision have unfortunately involved her, as well as myself, in a painful predicament; she will not however discard me, however late I may claim my happiness.—I am satisfied that she will not;" continued he, folding his arm round me as he spoke; "a tedious probation must precede my dearest hopes, but my Frances will hold out to me a bright example of patient fortitude; she will animate me to exertions for our lasting comfort, and she will not eventually withhold from me my reward." From this decision there was no appeal; and, painful as the protraction of our union to this distant period unquestionably was to both, there was no alternative but to

submit to it with resignation. I had remained almost passive during this conversation, but, having finally ascertained Montague's sentiments, his determination became mine.—I resolved to shape my conduct in every respect to his wishes, and, professing my resolution to abide by his decision, thus deserve the happiness to which I once more dared to look forward. This important point once settled, nothing now remained but to make a virtue of necessity, and submit to our fate with the best grace we could. Our union, however distant, was finally resolved on ; and Montague, now fondly considering me as the betrothed partner of his fate, passed the few days he was yet to stay in endeavouring to reconcile me to the long separation to which he considered it probable we were now doomed, from the circumstance of his long protracted absence from his regiment.

About a week after their return from

London, Clencorrie, who in this short interval was become extremely partial to him, returned into Yorkshire; and a few days after his departure, Montague, taking an affectionate leave of us, attended Mrs. Ayliner back to Richmond, from whence, as his health was now re-established, he went immediately to join his regiment in the North.

CHAPTER X.

MANY weeks of almost unbroken solitude succeeded the departure of our friends; Lady Carloraine, from being latterly so much harassed by mental suffering, became frequently indisposed. She had lost much of her former equanimity of disposition, and, being constitutionally nervous, even trivial occasions now agitated her with uneasiness: her spirits seemed quite broken; her mind appeared to have lost its tone; and I saw, with alarm, that this last painful trial of her feelings had materially injured her health. She declined by degrees our former visiting connexion with the neighbouring families; and unwillingly admitting any society but Dr. Grey, she indulged in a habit of solitude from which I vainly endeavoured to de-

tach her, and we passed nearly the whole of this dreary winter secluded and alone. The bare idea of removing to London occasioned her much inquietude, and she shrunk with horror from the possibility of another meeting with Lord Carloline. She had been affected with a sort of flying gout during the winter, but as the spring advanced I flattered myself with its removal, and occasionally tempted her out for short airings in a low carriage about the park. Time however elapsed, and her health visibly growing worse, a total distaste to her former habits ensued, and I felt a mournful presentiment that she was hastening to her tomb. About this period Montague obtained the command of the regiment in which he served; it was then removed to Winchester, and our solitude was occasionally enlivened by his visits. Lord Clencorrie passed this interval in Ireland. Highly patriotic in his conduct, as well as his opinions,

he invariably devoted some part of every year to the personal superintendence of the interests of his Irish tenantry; and having been so long absent on the Continent, he had deemed it necessary to spend some months upon his Connaught estate after his return; and they had been residing during the spring months at Clencorrie, when Lady Carloraine, firmly convinced in her own mind that a short period would inevitably terminate the life of suffering she had endured, became anxious for his return to England; and Clencorrie, ever attentive to the slightest expression of her wishes, came immediately from Ireland, accompanied by his Lady and her young family.

Assured that her departure was rapidly approaching, and aware that the immense distance between them precluded all hope of her ever again beholding Fortescue, she composed her mind to this painful certainty with the strongest efforts of resignation, and tranquilly dic-

tated that affecting farewell, which Clen-
corrie, at her earnest desire, afterwards
transmitted to him at Madras. And
now all her earthly consideration seemed
to concentrate in me. As her increased
danger became more evident, and her
dissolution appeared visibly drawing near,
she had imbibed a notion, that Lord
Carloline, won upon by the force of
her death-bed solicitations, would, in
compliance with her last wishes, retract
his former rejection of Lord Montague,
and calm her dying moments by con-
senting to our union. This idea seemed
to re-animate her sinking spirits; it
usurped the sole possession of her ima-
gination, and though all around her
were fully convinced of its fallacy, her
earnest desire to continue long enough
to make this last desperate effort for our
happiness lent new vigour to her ex-
hausted frame, and her anxiety for this
interview, so ardently desired, but so
unlikely to be successful, agitated her

last moments with the most harassing inquietude. Lord Clencorrie had early apprized Lord Carloraine of her indisposition and increasing danger; he had also dispatched the intelligence of it to Montague, who then presiding on a court-martial, held upon an officer of rank at Portsmouth was unavoidably detained there by the imperious duty of his situation. But with the Earl it was far different; and Lord Clencorrie, in hourly dread of her dissolution, sent repeated expresses after him to expedite the meeting, upon which all her earthly hopes seemed to rest, and for which she now languished with the most torturing anxiety. For a time his exertions seemed fruitless and unavailing, Lord Carloraine was no where to be found; he had quitted London, and, as was frequently the case, his household were unacquainted with his route or destination. One gleam of sunshine, however, diffused itself over her parting moments;

for the proceedings of the court-martial, upon which Montague was sitting, being necessarily adjourned to give the delinquent time to prepare for his defence, Montague seized this opportunity to gratify her desire of again beholding him, and crossing the country as expeditiously as possible, he came to pass the few hours, thus stolen from his duty, by the pillow of the dying saint. In her last moments my mother solemnly consigned me to his care; “Be her friend, her protector, and her guide,” said she, as she joined our trembling hands, but an instant before she died.—Whilst the breath of Heaven yet lingered upon her lips, she tremulously breathed forth an ardent prayer for our future happiness, and in the faltering expression of this tender hope, her gentle spirit sought “*another and a better world!*”

Of the melancholy hours which succeeded this mournful event, you may probably form some idea, for *you* too

have lost a mother! Montague felt our loss as deeply as ourselves: he had learned to consider Lady Carloline as a parent, in every sense of the word, and the tear of manly sorrow rolled in silence down his cheek, as he tenderly drew me from the awful scene of her departure. Lord Clencorrie, now become by the death of our mother Earl of Rathfarnham, was inconsolable for her loss. The mother who in *his* eyes had been the best of created beings was gone for ever! and, for a time, he appeared lost to every sentiment but despair. Montague was shortly obliged to depart. Compelled by the high responsibility of his situation to tear himself away from us, he earnestly implored me to collect my fortitude, and submit with resignation to our irretrievable loss; a loss which, in spite of all his efforts to repress it, affected Lord Rathfarnham even to the tenderness of female feeling!—He then bade us adieu, and, promising to return

to us the moment he could disengage himself from the arduous duties which now claimed him, he quitted the abbey, and returned to Portsmouth without delay.

CHAPTER XI.

TOWARDS the evening of the second day, after Lady Carlorraine's dissolution, and some hours after Montague had departed, Lord Carlorraine arrived.—Unknown where to direct them, the numerous expresses which Lord Rathfarnham had sent after him lay in London unattended to, but the last messenger having been indefatigable in his endeavours to learn his route, had at last traced him to Newmarket, whither he had gone from the villa of a sporting friend in Cambridgeshire, and, following him thither with the utmost expedition, found his Lordship deeply engaged in the scientific bustle of an October Meeting.—Fully apprized of the urgency of expedition, and assured that if he delayed Lady Carlorraine might probably die be-

fore he could arrive, the Earl nevertheless could not prevail on himself to sacrifice his interest to the wishes of his dying wife, or resist his desire to ascertain the result of his speculation, before he set out on his dreary journey.—He had made bets of some consequence, which as yet were depending, and he could not think of leaving Newmarket whilst these affairs were undecided; but the last match being at length over, and having terminated contrary to his expectations, the event of the meeting went decidedly against his hopes, and leaving him some thousands minus in his calculations, he cursed his ill-luck in a paroxysm of disappointment, and, throwing himself into his travelling chaise, took the road to Wilton Abbey in a frame of mind somewhat less amiable than even his usual disposition.—On leaving Honiton, where he had stopped to change horses, he encountered, with amazement, the carriage of Lord Montague, then on

his return to Portsmouth.—It was slowly ascending the brow of a steep hill, and Montague himself, whose person was slightly known to him, was leaning forward on the window, and speaking to his outrider, when the Earl's chariot and four drove rapidly past him, and furiously rattled down the bottom of the hill.—Their recognition was instantaneous and mutual, and the Earl reached the Abbey with his ill-humour proportionably increased by the evidence, which this circumstance accidentally conveyed, of Montague's connexion with the family being unbroken. Lord Rathfarnham, irritated by his unfeeling conduct, met him coldly upon the staircase when he arrived; but the traces of recent sorrow upon his countenance recalling the Earl to the recollection of the visible want of it on his own, he endeavoured to supply its place by its immediate affectation. With abundance of lamentation he expressed his sincere regret that the

news of Lady Carloraine's danger had not reached him earlier, and earnestly requesting that he might be immediately shown to her apartment. Lord Rathfarnham, disgusted with his hypocrisy, and perhaps unable to reply, motioned in silence to an attendant waiting in the gallery, who, throwing open the door of an adjoining chamber, discovered the apartment, hung with black, and dimly illuminated, with the body of Lady Carloraine lying in state, and surrounded with all the insignia of funeral magnificence! At this moment the most implacable of his enemies must have pitied the stricken Earl, startled out of his usual self-possession, and, for an instant, horror-struck at this awful vision, he staggered from the door, and reeling a few paces, sunk into a chair, and covered his face with his hands, while his whole frame shook with the violence of internal agitation. This strong feeling, however, seemed but momentary; habit, invinci-

ble habit, resumed its dominion over his soul, and indignantly dashing away the sudden tear from his eye, he composed his countenance to its customary expression, and descended to the breakfast room, whither Lord Rathfarnham had hastened to apprise us of his arrival, apparently re-assured, but secretly burning with resentment for the shock to which he had been exposed.

Lady Rathfarnham, naturally entering into the outraged feelings of her Lord, received him with an air of distant condescension. Lord Rathfarnham himself preserved a haughty silence, and for myself, absorbed in sorrow, after the first salutation I wept without reserve.

The Earl, already irritated by his recent terror, soon began to find this total silence exceeding irksome, and Lady Rathfarnham feeling the awkwardness of his situation, though evidently doing violence to her inclination, addressed some slight observations to him, which served

to relieve him from the embarrassing predicament in which this dearth of conversation involved him, without however calming his internal anger. Some trivial observation respecting his journey recalled Montague to his recollection, and fixing his stern eye upon me, with a look of interrogation that made me tremble, "I met a carriage with the arms of Montague upon it," said he, "and evidently from hence."

"You met Lord Montague himself then," fiercely answered Lord Rathfarnham, for the first time breaking silence, "and certainly from hence."

"I guessed so!" exclaimed the Earl, "I guessed so,—but at a crisis like this," added he sarcastically, "his tender tales might have been dispensed with; at a moment like this, *his* intrusion might have been spared."

Lord Rathfarnham checked the fiery ebullition bursting from his lips, and regarding him for an instant with a look of

proud defiance.—“ Under *my* roof Lord Carloraine,” answered he, “ Lord Montague is no intruder.—In every house of which *I* am the master, Montague is a welcome guest.”

“ I thank you, my Lord! I thank you!” exclaimed the Earl, with eyes flashing fire, “ but the insinuation might have been spared—into any house of which *you* are the master I shall not again intrude; and nothing, nothing upon earth, but my respect for the dear object that brought me hither now detains me in this.”

“ Liar, hypocrite! damnable hypocrite!” raved the enraged Rathfarnham, thrown completely off his guard by the glaring falshood of this assertion; “ you, who for the paltry profits of a horse race deserted your dying wife! *you* spared yourself a scene that Montague flew to share.—Yes, monster! he received her parting blessing! *He* saw the angel *die!*”

Naturally choleric, and now roused

almost to madness, Lord Rathfarnham could not restrain his passion; and hoarse with rage, he roared the stinging sentence in his ears, whilst the Countess, terrified at his violence, and dreading lest the storm which still struggled upon his lips should burst forth with a fury particularly indecent whilst the unburied form of his mother yet rested under the roof, seized him by the arm, and partly by force, mingled with entreaties, led, or rather dragged him out of the room. She returned however almost immediately; for Lord Rathfarnham, subdued by the violence of his emotion the instant he had lost sight of the object which had excited it, burst into a passion of tears over the insulted memory of his mother, and drove her back to the breakfast-room, lest in the interim Lord Carloraine should break the violence of his resentment upon me. But the Earl did not so far commit himself. *His feelings, whatever they might be,*

were too much under command to be so openly betrayed, and the exhibition of a warmth equal to Lord Rathfarnham's he would have considered as a degradation most disgraceful to his character.

Notwithstanding the turbulent scene which had just passed, the Earl preserved an appearance of almost matchless composure, though with his handkerchief to his eyes he at intervals seemed to be struggling to subdue his feelings, a piece of acting which Lady Rathfarnham contemplated with a countenance strongly indicative of contempt. She could scarcely restrain her most indignant expression of it, whilst I, long since assured of his total indifference to all that concerned my departed mother, witnessed this display with somewhat less surprise. His Lordship complained of fatigue, having, as he said, travelled a day and night without intermission, and expressing a desire for repose, Lady Rathfarnham rang to order up what re-

freshment he chose, and directing a chamber to be prepared for him, he retired to sleep for a few hours before evening. At tea-time the Earl rejoined us, but fixed in his determination not to meet him again while he meant to stay at the Abbey Lord Rathfarnham did not appear, but passed the whole of the evening in the library alone. Little conversation passed till the supper hour arrived, for Lady Rathfarnham detesting his hypocrisy spoke less than usual. Her manners, though perfectly polite, wore an air of cold constraint which he could not but feel embarrassing; and his Lordship, disgusted with society so uncongenial to his taste, and completely weary of the character he had thought it proper to assume, waited only till the butler had placed the chamber lights on the sideboard, ere rising from his seat, and addressing Lady Rathfarnham, he said, "From some information, Madam, which I have gained this evening, I find that

the necessary preparations for a certain melancholy event are already nearly completed." He was proceeding, when the Countess provoked at his cautious delicacy in all avoidance of my mother's name, interrupted him—"Your Lordship, I presume, alludes to Lady Carloraine's interment?" He bowed. "I understand that every preparation is already gone forward with, *my* interference therefore is perfectly unnecessary, and possibly undesired. I lament our unhappy loss most deeply; upon my daughter's account I feel it particularly distressing; but as I shall ever continue the same anxious care which I have hitherto manifested, it is not to *her*, perhaps, as to me, altogether irretrievable. For myself, Madam, I can only say, that long since aware of the unfortunate irascibility of Lord Rathfarnham's disposition I shall attribute the insult I have this day received to the irritable state of his present feelings; and confiding in

his due attention to etiquette, in the arrangement of the solemn ceremonial which must now shortly take place, I shall decline all interference in his plans, leaving the affair solely to his Lordship's direction ; and as my presence here can be but of little use, I shall to morrow take my leave."

To this pompous harangue Lady Rathfarnham deigned no reply ; she bowed assentingly as he concluded, and the Earl, somewhat mortified by the chilling stateliness of her deportment, lighted his taper to retire to his apartment. Lady Rathfarnham did not entreat his longer stay ; she curtsied in perfect silence, as his Lordship, approaching her with true Chesterfield politeness, gracefully saluted the extremities of her fingers ; then coldly touching my cheek, he expressed a sort of indistinct hope of soon seeing me in town, and ringing for his valet, betook himself to his bed-chamber. His receding steps yet reverberated on the stair-

case, when Lord Rathfarnham emerged from the solitude in which he had buried himself during the evening, and with honest detestation of his duplicity vented his heart-burnings in a bitter curse, as the Countess contemptuously recounted the courtly elegance of his farewell.

At day-break I heard the Earl's chariot roll from the door, and relieved from the restraint which his presence had imposed upon us, we passed the day in melancholy reflection, but in far more comfort than during the period of his stay. The remains of Lady Carloraine lay in state at Wilton Abbey during the first week after her decease; but at the commencement of the second they were sent off with more than customary splendour, on the road to Ireland, for interment, agreeably to her own desire, in the family burying-place of her ancestors. Lord Rathfarnham spared no expense in this melancholy duty, and regard for his mother having, in opposition to the

practice generally adopted, called forth this now somewhat singular mark of respect, he departed, accompanied by Dr. Grey, to attend her himself to the silent mansions of the tomb.

CHAPTER XII.

THE death of Lady Carloraine having naturally occasioned many alterations in the Devonshire establishment, Lord Rathfarnham's residence at the Abbey for some months became indispensable. We continued there during the autumn ; but the *accouchement* of the Countess being expected soon after Christmas, the latter end of December the family removed to London. It was late in the evening of a dreary day when we reached town ; and fatigued with the journey, I contented myself with writing a note to apprise Lord Carloraine of my arrival, and deferred my removal to Grosvenor Square till the next day. At an early hour in the evening the Earl's carriage arrived for me, and Lady Rathfarnham having claimed a promise of all the

time I could spare during her confinement, I took my leave of her, after a sojourn of some months in her affectionate society.

Lord Carloraine was from home when I reached Grosvenor Square; but I found that he had given orders to prepare for my reception, and I once more took possession of my former suite of apartments. I saw him on the following morning, and in this interview I fancied that he treated me with more attention than I had yet received from him, except during the short-lived splendour of my *entrée* into the *beau-monde*. In the course of our conversation he took occasion to inform me, that all objections to its propriety being now removed, he should, for the present at least, expect me to preside over his household, and that he felt little doubt, but that the evil impressions I had been encouraged to entertain of him would now speedily wear away; and that as I must ultimately be

convinced of the errors I had been led into by the reprehensible conduct of Lady Carlorainé towards himself, he should for the future rely upon the exercise of my duty and *obedience*. The last of these expressions he marked with peculiar emphasis; and although I did not at the instant comprehend the exact nature of the "*obedience*" which he required, I determined to take his meaning in a general sense, and conscientiously to discharge what I conceived to be my duty towards him, without entering into any logical definition of his Lordship's expectations. His confident assertion of my prejudices being shortly to be removed, I languished to find realized: it was to be "wished, and hoped, but scarce believed;" for my knowledge of his real character, and my perfect conviction of the undeviating system of deceit which had invariably marked every action of his life that had as yet come within my knowledge, left me but little room to

hope for the accomplishment of his prophecy, and notwithstanding his flowery vapouring, I still remained somewhat incredulous as to its fulfilment. I determined however to accommodate myself to his wishes as far as I was able, consistent with my own principles of moral rectitude; and, receiving his overtures of unanimity with proportionate respect, I endeavoured to acquit myself to his satisfaction in the situation it was now his pleasure that I should assume.

Lord Carloraine saw a great deal of company; he seldom upon any occasion dined alone; but his engagements at this period were principally political, for he had latterly become connected with the administration, and from his general entertainments ladies were consequently excluded, though upon my resuming my residence in Grosvenor Square, large parties of both sexes occasionally visited his table. His Lordship, as I soon learnt, speculated largely upon the turf, and

his name not unfrequently made a conspicuous figure in the annals of Newmarket. Such a variety of engagements naturally occasioned a variety of visitors also; and amongst some of these dissipated connexions I shortly began to suspect that the Earl was endeavouring to establish me by marriage. Excessively shocked at the little delicacy which he had manifested in his former proceedings, I hinted to him, as respectfully as I was able, a circumstance of this nature which had accidentally reached my ears, through the premature boasting of one of his chosen few; and aware from the manner in which his Lordship received it, that I had but little to expect from his consideration of my feelings, I determined to adopt a discouraging distance towards his profligate associates, whenever I was necessitated to mingle in their society, and by my own unbending habits of reserve effectually discountenance every idea of my knowledge or partici-

pation in his Lordship's designs. The possibility of my engagement to Lord Montague never seemed to have presented itself to his recollection; he did not appear to have given the probability of it a single thought, and satisfied that he had completely talked me over to his will, he fancied that he had now only to signify his pleasure, and find it implicitly obeyed. But my correspondence with Montague continued with increased regard. He was frequently in London, and in the intercourse of fashionable society we often met unnoticed, though our happiest hours, we mutually acknowledged, were those passed in Berkeley Square. In the domestic circle of Lord Rathfarnham, where his worth was duly appreciated, Montague was ever received with the flattering distinction of private friendship; independent of the consideration due to our meditated alliance, or to the rank which he now held in the public estimation. In the interest-

ing society of my brother's family, I passed all my leisure hours; I devoted the time which I could spare to Lady Rathfarnham, and to this measure, however he disliked it, Lord Carloraine could frame no objection; though with respect to himself all connexion with the family was entirely at an end. With the death of Lady Carloraine, all intercourse had ceased for the high soul of Lord Rathfarnham disdained every species of association with the Earl, and if they now ever met, though but by accident in the public streets, not even the tribute of a passing bow marked any recognition of their former near connexion. My deep mourning for my mother prevented me from appearing as much in public as formerly; and Lady Rathfarnham's young nursery confining her principally at home, the winter passed away imperceptibly in her charming society, and the period again returned for their annual visit to Ireland, upon which it had been

arranged that I should this summer accompany them.

Ireland had ever been inexpressibly dear to me: some of the happiest hours of my youth had been passed there; and my mother, passionately attached to this early scene of her wedded happiness, had not failed to inculcate in the youthful bosom of Lord Rathfarnham an ardent veneration for the interests of his native country, and that warm-hearted feeling of benevolence, so eminently conspicuous in the character of an Irish gentleman. Lord Carloraine had a house at Brighton, where, with some of his chosen friends, he usually passed the bathing season, and to which he had this summer invited me; but aware that the ties of decorum could be but loosely worn in such a dissipated assemblage as composed his private selection, Montague had expressed, independent of my own objections, his invincible repugnance to my joining the party. Accus-

tomed to consider all he said and thought, as “*wisest, virtuosest, discreetest, best,*” I unconsciously looked up to him for his opinion on every subject, and implicitly yielding to his superior judgment, I regulated my conduct in every instance by his wishes; and, declining the invitation of Lord Carloraine to accompany him to Brighton, I passed the summer with Lady Rathfarnham, in far less questionable society than I must inevitably have been exposed to at his Lordship’s favourite residence.

In London, where I lived under his roof and presided at his table, his visitors had insensibly become more select, though still in many respects highly objectionable; but at Brighton, where he lived under no restraint, and gave a loose to the natural bent of his character, his connexions were not unfrequently profligate in the extreme; and of the splendour of his *petit soupers*, and the brilliant achievements of his Baccha-

nalian parties, the newspapers unsparingly afforded confirmation.

After the delightful summer of 1801, part of which Lord Montague had passed with us at Clencorrie, we returned to England for the winter. Our mourning was laid aside; and Lord Carloraine, having been fortunate in his speculations at Newmarket, commenced the season with unusual spirit and gaiety. He gave several grand entertainments during the winter, and upon some of these occasions he appeared more than commonly anxious respecting my personal embellishment; he even condescended to lecture me upon the arrangements of my dress, and once or twice, when a particular individual was expected, to suggest alterations which I disdained to adopt. For a time I was at a loss to discover the origin of this solicitude, but my surprise upon the subject was speedily at an end; for in the pointed attentions of a noble Duke, then at the

acmé of public estimation, I read the solution of the Earl's extraordinary care. His Grace had insensibly become included in all our parties, and was admitted *en famille* by Lord Carloraine's particular order; thus, both in public and in private, he was constantly at my side, and this circumstance giving rise to some oblique congratulation, I began to reflect with alarm on the uneasiness which the report of it might occasion to Lord Montague, and I endeavoured to discourage his evident partiality by assuming an appearance of total insensibility to it; whilst Lord Carloraine, provoked at my indifference to the advantage of this alliance, strove to counteract its effects by his marked approbation of the Duke's continued attentions.

Compelled at length to determine upon some means of extricating myself from a pursuit which was daily becoming more painful to me, I resolved upon

having recourse to the generosity of the Duke himself; and, upon one of those occasions which the Earl liberally afforded him for the purpose of urging his regard, I ingenuously informed him of my actual situation, and long engagement to Montague. With a grace peculiarly his own, the Duke apologized for the uneasiness he had so unconsciously occasioned, and pained as he professed himself to be by the discovery of my previous attachment, he declared himself unable to persist in a pursuit which could in any shape interfere with the happiness of Lord Montague, of whose distinguished worth he avowed himself well aware; but as some recompense for his resignation of all pretensions to my favour, he demanded the continuance of our future friendship. To this request no possible objection could be made; for, independent of his rank, the superior delicacy of his conduct on this occasion, added to the rare

and striking endowments he was gifted with both by nature and education, claimed my warmest esteem; and although his Grace could not immediately divest himself of the preference he had latterly shown to me, from this period he carefully abstained from all professions of his regard; his lips were invariably sealed on the subject of his former affections, whilst Lord Carloraine, misled by the increased respect which now that his hopes were extinguished I considered due to the Duke, and ignorant of its real cause, witnessed our apparent good understanding with secret exultation. His Grace, actuated by the purest principles of honour, breathed not a syllable of the explanation which had confidentially passed between us: and Lord Carloraine, giving the reins to his creative fancy, already saw in imagination the ducal coronet of the house of R—— proudly glittering on my brow; when the early and lamented death of this

illustrious patron of exertions for the public welfare unexpectedly crushed the ambitious hopes of the aspiring Earl, and plunged a whole nation into sorrow, and his near connexions in despair !

A general sentiment of regret seemed to pervade all ranks upon this occasion : the magnitude of the public loss was universally deplored, and a complimentary mourning amongst the higher classes of society was in consequence partially adopted. But from this avowed tribute to his memory I carefully abstained, not from reluctance to show my respect for his acknowledged worth, but solely from a principle of delicacy towards Lord Montague ; for, dazzled by the brilliant prospects which this alliance had held out to him, Lord Carloraine had so openly encouraged the Duke's addresses, that I dreaded lest it should be believed that I also had approved of them, and I could not endure the idea, which it might probably hereafter give

birth to, of Montague's holding in my heart but a secondary place. My non-compliance with this mark of public respect excited the observation of the Earl, and angrily inquiring into the cause, he signified his pleasure that it should be immediately adopted; but my ideas on this subject were so opposite to Lord Carloraine's, that I could neither convey to his bosom sentiments, the delicacy of which he was utterly incapable of feeling, or teach him to acknowledge the sacredness of ties which his own heart had so notoriously disdained to recognize. Eager therefore to escape from any farther persecution from his matrimonial speculations, I seized this opportunity of entering on the subject, and candidly apprized him of the engagement which bound me indissolubly to Montague; an engagement sanctioned by the dying blessing of my departed parent, and confirmed by the certainty of unalienable regard. I still shudder to

remember the scene of violence that succeeded. Furious with rage, and in a paroxysm little short of madness, he dashed me from him upon the floor, and blasphemously cursing the hallowed memory of my sainted mother, he vented his hatred of Montague in terms of the most impious and vindictive execration. Almost stiffening with horror I crept from his dreadful presence, and sheltering myself from his farther vengeance in the silence of my own apartment, I strove in vain to calm the agony of my mind, and rouse myself to some sense of recollection; for a large and fashionable dinner party, at which I must inevitably preside, was to succeed the turbulent morning of this miserable day. I could with difficulty command exertion to make the proper change in my appearance: my senses were confused, and my whole frame nervous from alarm; but indisposition I dared not plead, and compelled to undergo this trying scene,

I at length descended to the drawing-room, though much later than usual. Some of the party had previously arrived; Lord Carloraine was already there, and playing *his* part with effect to the brilliant assemblage that surrounded him. Soft, smiling, and complacent, the courtly hypocrite was “himself again,” and all traces of the past seemed to have vanished into air. But not so the reality; for as, pale and still trembling from my recent agitation, I paused for an instant at the door to recall my fleeting courage, the observant Earl approached me with a countenance decked in smiles, and secretly griping my hand till I was ready to shriek with agony, “*curses, not loud but deep,*” issued from his closed lips as, with his habitual air of gallantry, he gracefully led me to a chair.

“Winning his carriage, every look
Employ’d whilst it conceal’d a hook:
When simple most, most to be fear’d;
Most crafty, when no craft appear’d;

His tales no man like him could tell ;
His words, which melted as they fell,
Might ev'en a hypocrite deceive,
And make an infidel believe."

The triumph of deception was in this instance complete ! The flowery elegance of his language, and the studied grace of his polished manners, had ever rendered Lord Carloraine a sort of favourite in society ; but his suavity was a veil worn only in the world, for though to the public eye he was invariably the same, yet in his more private hours, when his vigilance had been inadvertently " caught napping," he sometimes betrayed that he could, upon occasion, enact the tyrant with effect. Oppressed by such a tumult of emotion as now filled my bosom, I could scarce command my attention to the necessary ceremonies of the day, and lost in amazement at the facility with which the Earl apparently buried all remembrance of the morning scene in the sprightly chit-

chat of the dinner table, I regarded him with a mixture of astonishment and dismay; conspicuously opposed to him at table, and every instant exposed to the inexpressible annoyance of his insulting glance, a glow of almost pardonable resentment rushed into my cheeks, as I felt his satiric eye rest contemptuously on my countenance; and stung into the enviable superiority of conscious rectitude, I shuddered to confess, even to my own heart, that at this instant I despised my father! Gracious Heaven! that such a sentiment should ever find existence in the bosom of a child! But Lord Carloline was no common character; he was a compound of the most finished art, a model of deception, past the power of language to delineate!

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM this memorable period Lord Carloraine seemed to have divested himself of every particle of concern for me. I lived in his house, and I appeared in his parties when they happened to be such as I could mingle in with propriety; I had the use also of one of his carriages during my winter residence in town; but I derived not another solitary advantage from our affinity; and, from the moment that my engagement to Lord Montague had been unequivocally made known to him, he seemed to abandon me entirely to my fate. This total abdication of his parental rights cost me many hours of bitter uneasiness; but wholly unaccustomed to the comforts of his affection, except when ambition or interest excited its display, I soon be-

came habituated to his indifference, and, satisfied with the increased regard of those whose approbation formed the proudest triumph of my life, I learned to submit without repining to the evils of his Lordship's displeasure. In this manner time still elapsed, and the seasons duly revolved ; till the death of poor old Dawson, the town housekeeper, occasioned a material alteration in our domestic affairs. She had been for some time in a declining state of health, but no immediate danger was apprehended, and I was as usual staying with the Rathfarnhams in Devonshire, when the intelligence of her death was unexpectedly announced. Mrs. Dawson had been a resident in Grosvenor Square from the period of Lady Carloraine's marriage with the Earl, and, accustomed for many years to the sole management of the household, it appeared a difficult task to find a person of equal integrity to succeed her in this department ; I wrote

to Lord Carloraine, who was then at Brighton, for his directions on the subject, and at his express desire returned to town earlier than usual, for the purpose of selecting a proper person from the numerous applicants for her situation. It was a post of much importance in the family, from its confidential duties; and my choice was still unmade when the steward of Lord Inglefield, a nobleman nearly related to Mrs. Aylmer, being unfortunately killed by a fall from his horse, Lady Inglefield recommended his widow as a person eminently qualified to fill the vacant situation. Her husband had been a man of acknowledged probity, and having left a large family of children slenderly provided for, the consideration of its probable advantage to her, and the wish of obliging Mrs. Aylmer's friend, instantly decided me in my election; and the grateful letter I received from her, on my informing her of my compliance with Lady Inglefield's

recommendation, still more powerfully interested me in her favour. A short time was requisite for her to make some previous arrangements, and settle her business in the country, the sudden death of her husband having left his affairs in much embarrassment, and to dispose of her little property and place her children at a suitable school. During this interval, but after every thing was finally agreed on but the exact day of her coming to town, which I had unfortunately postponed on this account till it suited her own convenience, Lord Carloraine himself arrived unexpectedly from Brighton. I lost no time in apprizing him of my success with Mrs. Brandon, and the arrangements I had made for her entering on the duties of her situation as early as possible; but I felt nearly petrified with astonishment when he coldly informed me that he was sorry I had been so precipitate, that he had himself been fortunate enough to

meet with a Lady of very superior claims, the wife of an officer then abroad in an embarrassed situation, who had been powerfully recommended to him by a particular friend, and that he had in consequence himself settled every thing for her future residence in Grosvenor Square. I will not tell you that I received this information with silent submission to his Lordship's choice; for I strongly remonstrated with him upon the impropriety of placing me in this awkward predicament with Mrs. Brandon, and her patroness Lady Inglefield. I represented the capricious light in which I must appear to both of them, and urged the disappointment of the unfortunate widow, who had purposely disposed of all her property, and involved herself in unnecessary expenses on this account, which she had now no means of answering. Lord Carloline was deaf to all the arguments I could use, and, immoveable in his determination, he gave

orders with the most perfect *sang-froid*, to prepare for the reception of Mrs. Sutton, for so she was called, without farther ceremony; I was therefore under the immediate necessity of apologizing to Lady Inglefield for my apparent inconsistency, and of communicating to Mrs. Brandon the disappointment which I had no means of averting; but anxious to remedy the inconvenience in the best manner I was able, I requested her acceptance of a present, trifling in its amount, but of as much value as I could spare from my own slender purse, whilst the mercenary habits of the Earl, from whom I had no allowance, left me my own expenses and the claims of my servants to satisfy. Resolved however to exert myself in her behalf, if any thing likely to be of service to her should fall within my knowledge, I contented myself for the present with assuring her of my attention to her interests; and in return for my good

wishes, I received a letter of grateful thanks from her, which considerably increasing my previous high opinion, only added to my disappointment when Mrs. Sutton, the “lady of superior claims,” took possession of her situation.

I was at Richmond, passing a melancholy week with Mrs. Aylmer, who had recently sustained a dreadful loss in the death of our lamented General, when this lady came to town, and consequently did not see her for some days after she had taken up her residence in Grosvenor Square; but when she was at length introduced to me, her appearance by no means prepossessed me in her favour, or reconciled me to the loss of our venerable Dawson or Mrs. Brandon. It was my custom to breakfast in the library, where I also usually passed the morning, and at this meal Lord Carloraine sometimes joined me, when the excesses of the previous evening left him inclination or ability to rise early enough. I had be-

fore been informed of the arrival of Mrs. Sutton ; and whilst we were at breakfast, on the morning after my return, the Earl rang the bell, and requesting Mrs. Sutton would have the goodness to attend, he informed me, as before, that she was the wife of an officer, whom some imprudent conduct kept abroad upon a distant station, and after some flourishing and much circumlocution, he hinted that I might occasionally find her an agreeable addition to our domestic society. Mrs. Sutton shortly appeared ; she was a fine showy looking woman about forty years of age, of an Amazonian sort of figure ; rather masculine in her dress and air, and with a sort of repressed confidence in her manners, which to me appeared infinitely repulsive. By no means so much charmed with the appearance of this lady, as his Lordship evidently desired, I listened to his eloquent eulogium with respectful silence ; but as soon as he had concluded the ceremony of in-

troduction, and I had informed her from which of the servants she might obtain lists of the different tradesmen whom we employed, and other matters relative to her department, I suffered her to withdraw without noticing or appearing to understand the implied expectation of her stay, which the Earl's introduction, and the lady's well arranged morning dress, had indirectly informed me was expected.

Provoked and disappointed by the civil *hauteur* of my behaviour, Lord Carloline, the instant she had left the room, launched forth into an elaborate panegyric on her merits, accompanied by a careful enumeration of her various fashionable acquirements, and concluded his harangue, during which as before I preserved a determined silence, by hinting, in plainer terms, his wish for me to accept of her society when the absence of other company might render it desirable. You, who have before

doubtless heard much of Lord Carloraine from Fortescue, will be nevertheless surprised at his conduct in this particular instance ; for with all his vaunted deference to propriety in his public character, you would scarcely deem it possible that, however careless he might be in his private amours, he should yet venture to pursue them under a roof where a daughter yet resided. The fact however is certain, and though equally ignorant of her former or present misconduct, at the first moment of Mrs. Sutton's introduction to me, a vague sort of doubt as to her respectability crossed my mind ; and an indescribable something in his Lordship's look and manner, notwithstanding his apparent respectful demeanour, added to the suppressed expression of her downcast eye, excited an unauthorised suspicion that she was not exactly the amiable unfortunate he had represented her. That she was what she afterwards proved, I had not how-

ever the most distant idea ; but disliking the *tout-ensemble* of her appearance, I heard the Earl to an end without interruption, and then simply answered, that I had too little leisure upon my hands to avail myself of any advantage from Mrs. Sutton's society, and that as it was not possible for me to bring her forward as an associate for the friends who composed our visiting circle, I thought it most prudent to abandon the idea of it altogether ; and hastening over my breakfast, I busied myself in marking in my tablets my engagements for the following week, and shortly after left his Lordship to his reflections.

I readily discerned that Lord Carloraine was desirous of establishing Mrs. Sutton as a person of superior consequence in my opinion, but an invincible repugnance to her counteracted all his efforts ; and though I invariably treated her with all the respect I believed to be due to her, I never held any conversation with

her except upon subjects incidental to her situation, and still preserving a civil distance of deportment, I effectually precluded any future intrusion. From Norris however I soon learnt that, notwithstanding my reserve, Lord Carloraine admitted her to the utmost familiarity of association with himself; and that whenever it happened that I was absent, Mrs. Sutton presided at his breakfast-table in the library; and that although she never presumed to appear in my presence, she was the constant companion of his Lordship's leisure hours, and the standing jest of the visitors in the servants' hall. Convinced that expostulation with the Earl would be of no avail, I listened to this confirmation of my former distrust, if not without pain, at least without comment: the indiscretion of a parent I considered as a prohibited subject, and though I could not always restrain the angry loquacity of old Norris, who, having grown up from infancy in the

family of Lady Carloraine, felt excessively scandalized by the present conduct of the Earl, I endeavoured to check all animadversion on it from other quarters. Some months elapsed before I became fully apprized of the extent of his libertine conduct, and it was not till I returned from Windsor, where I had been passing a week with some young friends in the Easter holidays, that I felt myself called upon to act with more spirit and decision than I had hitherto deemed necessary.

Lady Inglefield, who had been visiting in the same family, brought me to town; and having previously taken a slight cold, I felt myself so indisposed on the next day, that intending to nurse myself for a private ball, to which I was engaged the following evening, I gave orders to be denied to all visitors, and learning that no company was expected to dine, the Earl having rode out early to pay a distant visit, and ordered dinner

an hour later on that account, I made little alteration in my dress, and did not go down stairs till his Lordship was returned, and the last dinner bell had rung. The dishes were already on the table, and you may guess my surprise and vexation, when I found Lord Carloraine leaning over the back of a chair, talking familiarly to Mrs. Sutton, who, attired with unsuitable elegance, appeared as a guest, and evidently waiting for my appearance. "Lady Frances," said my father, as I glanced at his companion with astonishment, "Mrs. Sutton favours us with her company, by *my* invitation, and I flatter myself, as you are indisposed, that her society will be found agreeable." As he said this, the Earl took my hand to lead me to a seat, but roused at this unexpected insult, with all I had heard from Norris rushing into my mind, I instantly withdrew it. I attempted to reply, but the words faltered

on my lips; and unable to repress my indignation, or articulate distinctly, I abruptly quitted the room, and rushing up stairs, threw myself into a chair, and burst into a passion of tears. The butler, by Lord Carloraine's order, reluctantly came to inquire if I chose to dine below, as his Lordship and Mrs. Sutton *waited* for me. Irritated past bearing at this additional degradation, I replied to the message with more warmth probably than prudence, and the next morning sought an interview with the Earl, and indignantly remonstrated with him on his glaring breach of decorum, in endeavouring to compel me to an association with Mrs. Sutton. With matchless command of countenance, he professed not to understand my allusions to her blemished character, although I had fully ascertained from Norris undoubted proofs of her erring conduct; and calmly hearing me to an end, he then inquired if I had any thing farther to say,

and coolly informed me “ that as Mrs. Sutton would from thenceforth honour his private table with *her* presence, I was at perfect liberty to spare him mine, except at such times as my own *strong* sense of decorum rendered my appearance there necessary. On public days,” he added, “ he should invariably expect my attendance.” In pursuance of this intimation, I for the future wholly declined dining at the Earl’s table, except upon such occasions as necessarily excluded Mrs. Sutton, who upon all others became his Lordship’s domestic companion. During this interval I preserved the strictest secrecy respecting this whole affair, and the unpleasant alternative I was now reduced to, even to my brother’s family. I also exacted a solemn promise from both Norris and Baptiste, who having grown grey in the service of my mother were still retained in mine, of never naming, or even hinting, it to any part of the family in Berkeley Square ;

aware if it once reached the ears of Lord Rathfarnham, it would inevitably involve him in another rupture with the Earl, a circumstance which as the daughter of one party, and the sister of the other, I dreaded in every shape to encounter; and, whatever his private errors might be, I shrunk with horror from the idea of dragging his depravity forth to public notice. From Montague I was still more solicitous to conceal it; for glowing with indignation at the repeated insult I had experienced, I knew that he would have instantly demanded the fulfilment of my mother's dying wish, and insist upon our marriage taking place before he could command a home for my reception, and thus involve himself in new embarrassments while his former ones were unsurmounted.

The gallantries of Lord Carloraine in the fashionable world were no secret; his amours were as open as the sun at

noon day, but his conduct in this instance yet remained unsuspected; for however unblushing his effrontery might be in other respects, it was scarcely to be credited that, trampling down the acknowledged decencies of society, he should dare to make his mistress the companion of his child!. Such indeed was the actual truth: but as I sedulously avoided the slightest intimation of this disgraceful connexion to any of my friends, it still remained a secret to all but our own household, until particular circumstances, occurring some time afterwards, occasioned a full discovery of Lord Carloraine's depravity. Montague during this period was stationed with his regiment at Exeter; and though our correspondence was regularly continued, I carefully avoided breathing the least hint to him of my unpleasant situation in Grosvenor Square. Spring and summer wore away; winter again succeeded: and as the seasons elapsed

I passed my time as heretofore, sometimes at Lord Rathfarnham's, sometimes in Devonshire, and occasionally much with Mrs. Aylmer, but ever anxiously anticipating the period to which Montague led my hopes, as the final end of our separation.

Towards the middle of the summer of 1806, an expedition against the Spanish settlements in South America had been planned by the British Government, and being finally resolved upon by the cabinet at St. James's, the regiment of Montague, already celebrated for its determined bravery, was amongst others ordered upon this difficult and, as it afterwards proved, disastrous service. I was then at Ramsgate with Lady Rathfarnham, who had a house there during the summer, for the benefit of sea-bathing for the younger children, some of whom were at this period recovering from the measles. Her Ladyship's brother, who was staying with us, had volunteered his services

upon the expedition, and I cannot describe the painful trials which my fortitude underwent, as I daily and hourly witnessed the preparations for its departure. Montague also was at Ramsgate, busily employed in superintending the embarkation of his regiment, and the troops destined for the service, and incessantly occupied by the importance of the enterprise, he found little leisure to attend to his individual concerns; but every hour which he could abstract from the pressure of public duty he devoted to the fruitless task of endeavouring to reconcile me to an absence which, however bitterly I deplored it, I well knew was irremediable. At length every thing was in complete readiness for their departure; the regiments were all arrived, many of them already embarked, and the fleet waiting to sail. The last evening Montague passed wholly with us; drowned in tears, I listened passively to his arguments of consolation, but my

heart sunk within me as the dreaded hour of our separation drew nigh. Distressed beyond expression at the weight of sorrow that overpowered me, he protracted his departure, and lingered till the last moment which he could spare to us had expired; then exerting all his courage, as the morning gun from the fleet recalled him to a sense of superior duty, he suddenly rose to depart, and with difficulty articulating a farewell to Lady Rathfarnham, he clasped me for an instant in silence to his bosom, and tore himself away! To think of sleep was impossible. Before day-break, the sound of the warning bugle, with the drums beating to arms in all quarters of the town, roused me from the lethargy of grief which subdued me, and with the first dawn of the morning, a painful though splendid scene of interest met my view. The pier and far along the beach being already thronged with soldiers in readiness to embark; men,

women, and children, cavalry, and baggage, were indiscriminately mingled in one heterogeneous mass; and as I anxiously observed the various movements of the assembling group, I fancied that amongst them I discerned the lofty figure of Montague placed on horseback upon the farthest extremity of the pier, which my window just commanded, and directing the embarkation of some distant troops, but too far off to distinguish him with certainty through the grey mist of the morning. I remained watching this prominent object till, the whole pier seeming to be in motion, it became lost amongst the crowd; and the melancholy reflection that numbers of these brave men probably at this moment beheld their country for the last time, succeeding in my imagination, my heart throbbed with anguish as my fears glanced for an instant on the agonizing possibility that such might be the fate of Montague! The remainder of the

troops were soon got on board the vessels lying off the pier for their reception, and, a brisk gale springing up, they were shortly under way, and in a few hours scarcely visible. I watched their spiry masts, as one by one they sank receding from my sight, and when at length not the faintest vestige of the fleet, which contained all that blest my existence, still cheered my aching vision, and its indistinct and shapeless forms were all faded into mist, I turned from my window to the mournful occupation of brooding over my fears, and conjuring up every possible imagery of danger, to which, on such hazardous service, my boding fancy represented it as possible for Montague to be exposed.

The torturing suspense I endured, during the awful interval which succeeded this parting, was intolerable. We shortly returned to London, and in the bosom of my brother's family, where my feelings were understood, and my regrets tenderly

participated, I alone found relief; and glad to escape from the oppressive remark of Lord Carloline, who, apprized of Montague's being engaged in it, frequently magnified with cruel malice the reported danger of the undertaking, I flew for solace to Lord Rathfarnham's far happier home, and pouring my sorrows into the gentle bosom of my amiable sister-in-law, I passed the principal part of my time with their family in Berkeley Square.

At length the daring object of the enterprise was arduously accomplished, and the brilliant termination of its achievements reached our ears! The British colours waved triumphant on the soaring heights of Monte Video; and crowned with glory by the subjugation of South America, the conquerors returned!

As our brave troops disembarked from fighting the glorious battles of their country, her white cliffs resounded with

acclamations of delight! Thousands rushed to the beach to behold their debarkation from the transports; and an invigorating huzza hailed every boat on its arrival. The glittering arms of the forming phalanx gleamed resplendent in the sun; their battered banners, borne on high, proudly floated on the breeze, and as the loud strains of martial music burst triumphantly on the ear, the thronged shores reverberated with the pealing shouts of congratulation, every heart throbbed with rapture, and every hand was extended to welcome their return!

All was joy and tumult! and Montague, having seen the troops safely landed, and every possible arrangement for their accommodation completed, quitted his regiment at Dover, and posted up to town. Never, oh! never, can I forget the struggling triumph which swelled my bosom, as, covered with laurels, I pressed my hero to my heart! Lord

Montague upon this expedition, which on the first blush of the business had held out such delusive prospects of advantage to the British nation, had been attended by the youngest and favourite brother of Lady Rathfarnham, the honourable Captain Garth. Enthusiastically attached to him, and glorying in the distinction of his private friendship, this estimable young man, although serving in a different regiment, then stationed in a distant part of the kingdom, being accidentally at Ramsgate upon leave of absence with his sister's family, at the sailing of the expedition, and incited by the enthusiasm which pervaded all ranks, had voluntarily accompanied him as a supernumerary aide-de-camp. He also had highly distinguished himself upon the service, and, having amply participated in the dangers of the campaign, every individual of their connexions shared the transports of their return.

Lord Rathfarnham gave several grand entertainments upon the occasion ; and the Countess, unwilling to be out-done by her Lord, shortly issued tickets for a splendid ball, to which all the officers engaged in the reduction of Monte Video, and then in London, were indiscriminately invited. It was intended to be conducted upon an extensive scale, and in the highest style of fashionable elegance ; and as London was at this period unusually full, a numerous and brilliant assemblage were expected. The taste of Lady Rathfarnham had in many previous instances been successfully displayed ; but in honour of this event she gave ample scope to her fancy : expense on the present occasion occupied no share of her consideration, and most of the numerous branches of the Royal Family being invited to the fête, the metropolis literally rang with the decorative splendours of her preparations.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Up springs the dance along the lighted dome,
Mix'd and evolved a thousand different ways,
The glittering court effuses every pomp,
The circle deepens—beam'd from gaudy robes,
Tapers, and sparkling gems, and radiant eyes ! ”

ANXIOUS to do honour to Montague's choice, and to an entertainment of which he was in part the ostensible cause, I had on this evening arranged my dress with unusual care, and decorated my person with a profusion of valuable ornaments. A brilliant diamond tiara, the gift of my partial Montague, sparkled on my brows, and, figuratively blazing in jewellery, I was stepping into my carriage, to proceed to Lady Rathfarnham's, when one of the horses suddenly became restive, and obstinately plunging forward, the coachman declared that he could not venture to drive him amidst the throng of car-

riages in Berkeley Square. It was necessary therefore that another horse should be substituted, and I returned into the hall, to wait while the carriage went round to the stables for the change to be effected.

My spirits were slightly hurried by the alarm of this circumstance, and Baptiste opened the library door for me to sit down, while he went below to procure a glass of water. Lord Carloline, who had dined abroad and returned earlier than usual, was sitting by the fire with his back towards the door, and Mrs. Sutton busily engaged in pouring out his tea. Supposing it some familiar visitor who had casually dropped in, he arose on my entrance with a movement towards a bow; but hastily checking his meditated civility, he regarded me for an instant with involuntary surprise, then scornfully glancing his eye over my magnificent attire, he bowed profoundly low, and, with all the mockery of sarcastic homage, the-

atrically exclaimed from Holcroft's popular work,

" All hail to the hero ! whom victory leads
Triumphant from fields of renown !
From the shrieks of the orphan, from scenes drench'd in blood,
And the sacking of many a fair town ! "

The expression and countenance of Lord Carloraine beggared all description ! but the malicious allusion of the lines roused the warmest feelings of my heart, and I was on the point of giving utterance to them, with a warmth perhaps pardonable from the provocation, when Baptiste returned with the water, and fortunately prevented my departing from my usual self-possession. I had sufficient resolution to conceal their effect upon me in his presence, and the carriage at that moment drawing up to the door, I curtsied to his Lordship with all the dignity I could assume, and quitted the room ; leaving Mrs. Sutton, who had arisen on my entrance, standing perfectly motionless, awed as it seemed into re-

spect, by the glittering splendours of my appearance. My calmness was nevertheless but momentary; my passions were all in arms, and, throwing myself into a corner of the carriage, I vented my feelings in a copious flood of tears; and, almost sobbing with emotion, the carriage stopped in Berkeley Square, before I had time to dry them from my cheeks.

Lord Rathfarnham met me upon the staircase at the grand entrance, and amidst the blaze of light which burst from the laurelled arcades of the brilliantly illuminated ball-room, he readily discovered my visible uneasiness. None but the family party were yet assembled; and Montague, as he placed my arm within his own, questioned me anxiously as to the cause: pressed by their inquiries I was at length forced to acknowledge the recent insult I had received. Lord Carloraine was my father, and, solely from consideration for my feelings, Mon-

tague delicately abstained from all his resentment ; but the choler of Lord Rathfarnham, generally ready raised, now broke forth with sudden fury, and he was volubly pouring forth a plentiful volley of execrations, when a thundering rap announcing the arrival of other company, recalled him to his recollection, and the Countess to her banished smiles.

This incident however destroyed my comfort for the evening ; for the bitterness of the quotation, and its mischievous application to Montague, excited reflections which served only to lessen the pleasure I had anticipated. My ideas were quite deranged, I could think of little else ; and so cruelly had Lord Carloline's malicious irony succeeded, that I could scarcely find enjoyment in the festive purpose of this brilliant meeting. I would willingly have declined dancing at all, but Lady Rathfarnham, whose spirits were on the wing, was all smiles and gaiety ; she would accept no excuse,

and giving her hand to one of the Royal Dukes with whom she opened the ball, she led or rather flew down the dance with almost aerial vivacity. My spirits however, were unequal to the exertion; I could not surmount my vexation; and as soon as the set was ended, I declined dancing again, and for the rest of the evening, either patrolled the rooms, or talked apart with Montague.

I saw Lord Carloraine no more for some weeks after this affair; but the bitter recollection of his ill-timed sarcasm cost me many a secret pang. Before Christmas Montague went with his regiment over to Ireland; it had suffered very severely upon the service in South America, and many important changes having consequently taken place, the vacancies occasioned by deaths or removal were now being filled up, and amongst such a number of young and inexperienced officers as it necessarily brought under his command, he considered his presence at

his post altogether indispensable. For myself, my time passed as usual during the winter; but Mrs. Aylmer, who was still suffering severely under the loss of our revered General, had been latterly attacked by a painful rheumatic complaint, and being sometimes confined for weeks together to her apartment, I devoted all my leisure hours to her comfort and consolation.

CHAPTER XV.

“ He that getteth a wife beginneth a possession, a help unto himself, and a pillar of rest : where no hedge is, the possession is spoiled ; and he that hath no wife will wander up and down mourning.”

LORD Montague, as it seemed, fully experienced the truth of this sacred assertion ; for, tired of the wandering and uncertain sort of life in which from his military avocations he had been for many years engaged, he began to look forward with anxiety to the expiration of the restrictions upon his property, and to anticipate the completion of our union with increased impatience. His regiment had been stationed for some months in the North of Ireland, and in this remote situation, where the morning's lounge afforded little variety, and the mess-room dinner still brought with it no change, he began to feel weary of

the unvarying routine of country-quarters, diversified only by the uninteresting recital of petty conquests, or parade amours of his junior officers, (many of them little better than boys of fashion just emerged from the trammels of a public school,) or of listening for hours to tedious details of the hunting and shooting achievements of these youthful "heroes of lace and feather." From the insipidity of such occupation, his capacious mind turned with disgust, and occasionally seeking relief from the *ennui* which he frequently experienced, he passed much of his time in desultory rambles about the island, or in visiting *en passant* the few families he was connected with by former acquaintance or present vicinity.

" Ah ! say without our hopes, without our fears,
Without the *home* that plighted love endears,
Without the smile from partial beauty won,
Oh ! what were man ? A world without a sun ! "

To this opinion, so elegantly express-

ive of the fascinating power of female influence, Lord Montague most unquestionably subscribed ; for from these rambling visits he invariably returned to his solitary sojourn, with the pictured home of his imagination more predominant in his wishes : it was the haven of his fondest hopes, the cessation of all his toils, and, looking forward to it with increasing anxiety, it imperceptibly became the constant subject of his correspondence. But from the gratifying anticipation of individual happiness, he was suddenly aroused by considerations of higher import ; for at this period the question respecting the propriety of the Catholic emancipation had begun every where to excite a considerable degree of interest, but more particularly in the sister kingdom, where its utility was become generally insisted upon. Amidst the party feuds to which this popular subject gave birth, the internal divisions, which upon a former occasion had plung-

ed Ireland into all the horrors of a ruinous rebellion, seemed to be upon the point of again breaking forth; and whilst all ranks beheld the ferment with the most alarming expectations, it required the strictest vigilance and intrepidity to avert the baneful consequences of this desolating furor. In private societies, as well as in open meetings of all descriptions, this subject of general interest was universally declaimed upon, and the public mind agitated to such an unusual height, that it demanded the most energetic exertions of the civil department, aided by the powerful efforts of military co-operation, to check its influence on the irritable feelings of the unlettered Irish peasantry, and by these means restrain their impetuosity from bursting forth into general rebellion : indefatigably engaged, where his services were of such importance, Montague remained during the winter months in Ireland. At this crisis the obvious progress of disaf-

fection shook the United Kingdom with alarm; and Montague, the patriotic Montague, beheld the mischievous operation of the religious panic which incited it, with virtuous indignation. Attached to no party, entirely independent of ministerial influence, and equally unbiassed by the florid arguments of its general opposers, Montague upon all occasions dared to think for himself; and the annihilation of the Irish Catholic restrictions being again brought before Parliament, he came to England early in March to add his testimony to its impropriety, and bear his part in the execution of his legislative duties. A short time prior to his return, Lord Rathfarnham had been appointed ambassador to the court of St. Petersburg, and a few weeks before Montague came from Ireland, his family had sailed for Russia, attended by a splendid retinue.

Some events of great national importance had recently occurred; and at this

juncture the Catholic emancipation was become in England, as well as in Ireland, the subject of general debate. Whilst the measure was, agitating with unusual interest in both Houses of Parliament, the unrestrained discussion of it formed in all parties the prevalent topic of conversation ; and the official situation of Lord Carloline making his table the occasional rendezvous of his political compeers, the sentiments of the leading orators on both sides of the question were daily reiterated in my hearing. Our private, as well as cabinet dinners, during this busy session, were frequent, and amidst the conversation that passed at his Lordship's table, I soon learnt that my "*Hero*," my "*wandering Knight-errant*," as Lord Carloline sarcastically denominated him, shone forth as a speaker of distinguished eminence against the extension ; well aware of the steadiness and liberality of Montague's religious principles, I gloried in the elo-

quence those principles called forth ; his sentiments were given as authority upon all occasions, his speeches were detailed diurnally in the public prints, and whilst they were hourly rung in my ears under the bitterest animadversions of party spirit, I listened with exultation to the angry triumph thus awarded him. Lord Carloraine, for sundry cogent reasons, took no active part in these debates ; although he could upon occasion speak much to the purpose, he now contented himself with giving a silent vote in the business ; for his own part he cared but little how the matter was decided, and as long as he could preserve the “loaves and fishes” unmolested, the Catholics or their claims were of little consequence to him. For a history of these political feuds I must refer you to the publications of the times ; some of them were intimately connected with, and induced, the most interesting occurrences of my life, and I cannot therefore entirely omit

them, but it is wholly incompatible either with my ability or inclination to detail them more copiously. It is not however to be supposed, but that women feel deeply interested in the political scenes passing around them; monarchs cannot be dethroned, or states shaken to their base, without exciting strong sensations in minds capable of reflection; but warmly as the *amor patriæ* undoubtedly glows in the female bosom, and brilliantly as their talents may have been occasionally called forth, it seems to me that women have necessarily little to do in the discussion of public affairs. If it be true that “where the women are depraved, the state totters in its foundation,” (a fact latterly exemplified by numerous instances in a neighbouring kingdom,) their devotion to the interests of their country is best proved by the faithful discharge of their domestic duties; and as long as the modest charms of retiring virtue constitute the acknowledged

attributes of feminine excellence, the petticoat patriot clamouring for distinction and boldly challenging notoriety, can excite only sentiments of pity and contempt.

At the period I am describing, the "broad bottomed administration," as it was expressly denominated from its concentration of superior talent, was in the zenith of political glory, and under the duration of its influence, a series of events occurred, which, calling forth the most strenuous exertion of the Royal Prerogative, impressed the public mind with a general feeling of amazement. A motion had been introduced nearly at the same time into both Houses of Parliament, respecting the extension of the Catholic privileges, in consequence of which some spirited debates arose as to the propriety of pressing the measure, after the Royal disapprobation of it had been openly avowed. It was evident from all that passed upon the subject, that an un-

fortunate misunderstanding had some where taken place, and while the ministry professed to consider it as resting with the Sovereign, it was expressly announced from the "*highest authority*," that the Royal opinion had been uniformly declared : much political altercation arose from this extraordinary affair, but it still remained enveloped in mystery, and those in office declining to give the assurances demanded of them, the whole of the ministry were incontinently dismissed, and a new administration arranged without delay. At this eventful crisis the demon of party spirit, as it seemed, had broken loose, and the warring controversies of the nation reached an unprecedented height : they were in fact become alarming in the highest degree, inasmuch as they threatened to involve, in the mischievous consequences that arose from them, every dear and social tie ; friends became foes, and the nearest connexions under their influence

changed to inveterate enemies; there seemed to be no neutral point to rest upon: and amidst this tumult of political warfare, the paroxysms of rage in which Lord Carloraine sometimes returned wearied and disappointed from the late sittings of the Upper House, and in which I occasionally accidentally encountered him, threw me into terrors I cannot now describe. His Lordship, though he had taken no conspicuous part in the affair, had in common with the rest of his party been displaced, and, smarting with disappointment under the loss of his official emoluments, he vented his resentment in terms of the most vindictive opprobrium on the new ministry. It was after one of these midnight cabals, that the circumstance to which I have before alluded took place, and at length drove me an alien from my parental home.

On the memorable night on which I finally quitted my father's roof, I had been at the opera with the Duchess of

Albemarle; we had staid later than usual on account of a new ballet being performed, and had afterwards returned to a splendid supper party in Portland Place. It was past three o'clock when I reached home, and excessively fatigued by the lateness of the hour, I went immediately to my apartment. Almost slumbering while Norris took the jewels from my hair, she at length left me; the house was soon perfectly quiet, and I sunk into a profound sleep, from which I was suddenly aroused by terrific cries of fire! I started instantly from my bed, and, under the stupifying influence of drowsiness and alarm, vainly essayed to withdraw the night-bolt of my chamber-door; I accomplished it with difficulty, and, rushing into the gallery, beheld the staircase wrapt in flames and the affrighted servants flying in all directions! Roused into instantaneous recollection, a moment's thought showed me that my father only seemed absent, and rushing

towards his apartment, where the fire raged with fury, I beheld the room enveloped in flames but the bed untouched; I uttered a shriek of agony, and fled from the blazing chamber to seek for him elsewhere. The house was by this time filling with people who had forced the doors from the street, the firemen were already playing the engines on the front; but all within was confusion and dismay; and nearly suffocated with smoke, and still shrieking for my father, I flew from room to room imploring them to seek for him. At the foot of the second staircase I was stopped by Johnson, the Earl's valet, who, catching my arm, forcibly drew me back to the lower gallery, and leaving Baptiste in charge of me, with a look of commiseration which even at that moment of horror did not escape my observation, he again darted through the flames in search of his absent master. Frantic with terror, I burst from his aged grasp, and rushing up the blazing stair-

case reached the upper gallery time enough to behold Johnson drag Lord Carloraine from the apartment of Mrs. Sutton, who, roused from her affrighted slumbers, clung screaming to him for safety, and materially impeded their mutual preservation. The exclamation of joy which I was uttering at beholding him safe, at the sight of his companion died instantly upon my lips ; and shocked beyond expression at this public discovery of his disgrace, I sunk in speechless agony against the balustrades of the staircase, whilst Johnson, shaking the abandoned woman from his arm, dragged Lord Carloraine, who was by this time wide awake, into the gallery, and leaving him to provide for the safety of his frail associate, carried me down almost lifeless into the hall, amidst the pity and execrations of the multitude that surrounded us ! What followed I know not ; for, overpowered with shame and terror, I sunk into a state of insensibility, in which

I was removed to Admiral Crawford's on the opposite side of the Square, where at day-break, when I recovered my recollection, I found myself in a strange apartment, and Mrs. Crawford anxiously watching by my bed-side; I had before been slightly known to this amiable family, but the kindness I experienced from them on this alarming event laid the foundation of a friendship which I trust will expire but with our existence.

Thoroughly awake to all the horrors of my situation, the sensations which now rushed into my mind were infinitely distressing. Mrs. Crawford, who had heard all the circumstances, exerted herself to calm my uneasiness, and assuring me that Lord Carloline, whom I could not bring myself even to name to her, was perfectly safe, and that the fire was got under with less difficulty than was expected, insisted upon my endeavouring to compose myself to sleep. Repose however was out of the question, I

could not for an instant close my eyes, and I passed the first hours of the morning in ruminating on the circumstances which had thus deprived me of a home, and in writing to Lord Montague to apprize him of what had happened. I knew that it was not possible for him to have yet heard of the fire, for he had left town the preceding evening for the purpose of hunting with his Majesty at Windsor, and it was still so early, that I hoped my letter might reach him before the Royal train had departed from the castle. My wishes were fortunately realized; Montague had not yet quitted Windsor, and on receiving my hurried summons he hastened back to town, and came immediately to Admiral Crawford's, where we passed the morning in deliberating on the mode of conduct which it was now proper for me to adopt with respect to Lord Carloraine.

It has ever been my decided opinion that, from the moment a woman accepts

the addresses of a man of honour, and he consequently becomes the acknowledged object of her choice, she is undoubtedly accountable to him for the propriety of her conduct in every action of her future life; such however, have ever been my feelings respecting Lord Montague, and under their influence I have invariably regulated my conduct; unable to conceal from him any longer the indignities which I had been exposed to by the shameless conduct of Lord Carloraine, I circumstantially informed him of every circumstance which had occurred. Montague blamed me severely for having hitherto kept it from his knowledge, and, indignant at the repeated insults I had experienced from the Earl, he expressed his detestation of his principles in the highest tone of resentment. He would not entertain for an instant any idea of my returning to my former home, and, absolutely prohibiting all mention of it in future, he urged, as I

had foreseen, that our marriage should take place without delay. Of the lease of his town-house more than twelve months were yet unexpired, and the family seat in Cumberland had been for years too much neglected to be readily made habitable ; but to obviate the objection which these untoward circumstances presented, he proposed to become the tenant of a ready-furnished house in London, till his own should be at liberty, and to pass the interim in travelling, or as circumstances might render it eligible. Notwithstanding all his representation, and attractive as this scheme of happiness appeared, I dared not immediately decide upon it ; I dreaded to involve him in unnecessary expenses, and I wished for quiet and solitude to collect my harassed thoughts. Montague, finding all his rhetoric upon this point ineffectual, next pointed out the propriety of my going immediately to Mrs. Aylmer's till the *bruit* which the discovery of

Lord Carloraine's disgrace would naturally occasion had subsided, since there we could arrange our proceedings more at leisure. In the agitated state of my nerves, this idea had not occurred to me; but, soothed by the hope of comfort which it promised, I embraced the proposal with delight; and Montague, infinitely gratified by having in some measure tranquillized my mind, waited only to express to the Crawford family our grateful sense of their kindness, and set out for Richmond to prepare Mrs. Aylmer for my reception. At Mrs. Crawford's desire, my own servants, and such of my private property as they could obtain in the present deranged state of affairs, were removed to her house, and the next morning her carriage conveyed me to Richmond. Montague himself attended me thither, and staid the whole of the day in the hope of reconciling me, aided by Mrs. Aylmer's advice, to his

original plan ; but, fully aware of the inconvenience which must necessarily attend its execution, I postponed my decision for the present, and, desirous that I might have no omission of duty towards Lord Carloline to reproach myself with hereafter, I consulted Montague as to the propriety of informing his Lordship of my present residence, and determination not to return to Grosvenor Square, and with his approbation, the same day, addressed the following letter to the Earl.

“ MY LORD, *Richmond, April 1807.*

“ Considering it a duty incumbent on me to apprise your Lordship of my personal safety and present residence, I have embraced the earliest opportunity of informing you that I am now under the protection of Mrs. Aylmer at Richmond, and also of conveying to your

Lordship my determination as to my future conduct, made under the approbation of friends deeply interested in my welfare and reputation. After such a discovery as I am compelled to recall to your recollection, your Lordship must be perfectly well aware that *I*, the daughter of a chaste and honourable mother, can never again inhabit a home dishonoured by the abode of your Lordship's present associate. Under the painful consideration of these circumstances, I have been compelled to seek the protection of a lady well known to you as the revered friend of my estimable mother, and your Lordship will not be surprised, nor I am persuaded displeased, to learn, that for the future I feel myself under the necessity of entirely declining yours. Notwithstanding my determination upon this subject, I shall still hold it my duty to apprise your Lordship of any material change in my fate; and in the sincere hope that you may be induced to reflect

seriously on the disgraceful circumstances which have driven me from my paternal abode,

“ I am my Lord, &c. &c.

“ F. H. C. DELAMERE.”

“ *Lord Carloraine.*”

To this letter Lord Carloraine deigned no reply ; and as soon as my packages arrived at Richmond, I busied myself in assisting Norris to arrange their contents in the apartments which Mrs. Aylmer had allotted me. In this employment my mind became somewhat relieved, and in a few days I began to consider myself entirely at home.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Skilled to pronounce what noblest thoughts inspire,
To blend the speaker, with the patriot’s fire,
Bold to conceive, nor timorous to conceal,
What Britons dare to *think*, he dares to *tell*.”

AT this juncture the United Kingdom was in a state of indescribable commotion : a new administration had recently come into office, and the sudden dissolution of Parliament having sent the Commons back to their constituents, a general election had in consequence taken place, and the pressure of public business being unusually heavy, the new Parliament were summoned to meet without delay. Some few days were necessarily occupied in the administration of the oaths to the members, and other forms incidental to the opening of a new session ; and this period Lord Montague passed

principally at Richmond, fondly urging me to the adoption of his former plan, and for which he hourly fancied he discerned stronger necessity. Mrs. Aylmer was evidently in a very precarious state of health, she was frequently confined for weeks together to her apartment ; and he dreaded lest in some of his unavoidable absences with his regiment, her death should eventually deprive me of her protection. Under this presentiment he anxiously pressed upon my mind the propriety of our immediate union, and having gained Mrs. Aylmer to his party, I at length acquiesced. As soon as this important point was decided, Montague went immediately to town to make the necessary arrangements for it.

The Bishop of —, Lady Rathfarnham's paternal uncle, as a family connexion, had long claimed the office of uniting us whenever our marriage should take place ; and apprizing his Lordship and Captain Garth of our intentions, he pro-

cured a special licence, and it was settled that the ceremony should take place at Richmond on the following day. Montague had previously proposed that, as soon as it was over, we should depart on a summer tour for a few months into the North, where his regiment was then stationed, leaving our winter plan for the present unarranged; but the final discussion of the Catholic question having been in the interim fixed for the ensuing Wednesday, a special call of both Houses of Parliament had taken place, and as the attendance of the members was particularly required, we were under the necessity of either delaying our marriage, or at least keeping it secret, till this important business was settled. Montague preferred the latter, and having arranged every thing for its private solemnization, the ceremony was performed in Mrs. Aylmer's drawing room in the presence only of her household, and Lady Rathfarnham's youngest sister, her brother

Captain Garth, upon this occasion officiating for Lord Rathfarnham by giving me away. As soon as it was over, our friends returned to town, and Montague having previously ascertained that Lord Carloline, accompanied by Mrs. Sutton, was gone to Brighton, while the house in Grosvenor Square was undergoing the necessary repairs, wrote a cool but civil letter to him, to announce the celebration of our marriage. He also transmitted an account of it to Lord Rathfarnham at St. Petersburg; but, satisfied of his affectionate regard, we had little doubt either of his approbation or concurrence in our proceedings.

Three happy days flew rapidly away, during which Montague remained wholly at Richmond; but on the morning of the fourth he rode to town, and on his return to dinner gave orders to be called at an earlier hour than usual the following morning, that being the day fixed upon for the final discussion of the Catholic ques-

tion. On this important occasion he was to sustain a prominent part; his unbiassed principles were well known, and the frequency of his official residence in Ireland having afforded him opportunities of superior information for ascertaining the propriety of the desired measure, his sentiments were anticipated with much anxiety. Deeply interested in a question which involved the dearest and most sacred rights of the British Empire, he had given to the Catholic claims his most serious consideration; and he prepared on this day to discharge his duty to his country, by giving his opinion the fullest force of his political eloquence. In the memorable debate which had preceded the sudden dissolution of the former Parliament, he had borne a distinguished share, and it was therefore expected that, entering more fully into the subject, he now would support his avowed opinion with an adequate force.

of argument, drawn from the undeniable sources of his personal observation.

Montague, as had been foreseen, spoke long and eloquently upon the subject. The interests of thousands yet unborn seemed to hang upon his exertions, and, animated into more than his usual energy of declamation, a rich strain of impassioned eloquence burst impressively from his lips! He roused the feelings of his compatriots into perfect unison with his own; and whilst the admiration of the concurring senate broke forth in loud and grateful cheerings, his arguments brought conviction to the bosom of his applauding hearers!

He had left Richmond at an early hour, but it was nearly four o'clock in the morning when he again reached it; for the House, deeply occupied in this interesting subject, sat unusually late; and we were yet lingering over a protracted breakfast, when a gentleman on

horseback, attended by a groom in a plain livery, rode up to the hall door, and inquired for Lord Montague. He was shown into the library, where Montague shortly attended him. They continued together a considerable time; but as he was in the habit of having gentlemen frequently visit him there, I scarcely noticed the circumstance, though I remarked that, after he was gone away, Montague seemed unusually thoughtful. Towards dusk the same gentleman returned on horseback as before; Montague was again closetted with him in the library, and after more than an hour had elapsed in private conversation, he rang for his servant, and giving orders for his carriage to be immediately prepared, he came into the dining parlour and, affectionately embracing me, said that he was going to town with his visitor upon business which admitted of no delay.

Mrs. Aylmer had been for some days

indisposed with her rheumatic affection, a cold and chilling atmosphere had confined her to her chamber, and for the last two days she had not ventured down stairs. I passed the hours of his absence therefore principally alone: after the evening closed in, a book occupied my attention till nearly eleven o'clock, when I began to grow impatient for his return. It was a clear moonlight evening, and though late in the spring, it was still cold and frosty. The sandwich tray stood undisturbed upon the table, and, stirring up the fire till it burned brightly for his reception, I threw up the window and listened anxiously for the sound of his carriage on the turnpike-road: still however he came not, and I was beginning to feel somewhat uneasy at his absence, when the groom returned from town alone, bringing me a short note from his master, which merely said that, being unavoidably detained by important

business, he should not return to Richmond before morning.

With this information I went immediately to rest, and, little dreaming of the painful trial that awaited me, slept away the hours in temporary forgetfulness.

I was scarcely awake in the morning, when I fancied I heard Montague's voice under my window. I immediately arose, and, drawing aside the curtain, softly opened the window to ascertain if he was returned. I felt disappointed when I perceived that it was Captain Garth, who, standing upon the hall steps with the bridle upon his arm, waited for the groom to take his horse round to the stables, while he directed the house-maid, who was busy in the hall, to inform me immediately that he was come to breakfast with me. In consequence of this intimation, I was half dressed when the messenger reached my room, and, somewhat surprised at his unusually early visit, I speedily descended to the break-

fast parlour. It was yet very early, and the room cold and comfortless; the fire was scarcely lighted, for the servants were not all risen; and Captain Garth, weary of waiting for the tardy services of the slumbering groom, had gone round into the stable yard to put his horse up himself. I rang to hasten the preparations for breakfast, and while I was still speaking he came back into the parlour. I fancied he looked agitated, and much paler than common, as, shaking me by the hand, he repeated that he was come to breakfast with me.

“Are you not very early?” said I, smiling; “this is not your usual habit I believe.”

He smiled in return, but it was evidently forced, and I readily discovered that something clouded his spirits.

“Montague is in London,” said I, as I poured out the coffee.

“Yes, I know, I have seen him there,” he answered.

“ He went last evening,” I resumed, “ and I am now in momentary expectation of his return ; indeed when I heard you, I thought he was come.”

Captain Garth placed his coffee upon the table, and hesitated for a moment before he spoke. “ Montague cannot be at home yet,” said he ; “ he is unavoidably detained. I have seen him this morning, almost within the last hour, but at present you must not expect him ; you must make up your mind to the disappointment,” continued he, seeing me look anxiously ; “ for his absence, I assure you, is both unpleasant and unavoidable.”

“ Good Heavens !” I exclaimed— “ You quite alarm me. What is the reason that he cannot return ? Tell me, I entreat you,” continued I, trembling with I know not what sort of apprehension. “ What *can* have happened ?”

“ You have courage, my dear Lady Montague,” said Captain Garth, “ and

you must now exert it. Do not terrify yourself," added he, rising and pressing my hands between his own, while I shook with alarm.

"Montague is safe; he is quite safe," continued he, as my agitation increased, "but—

"But what? Tell me at once, in mercy tell me," cried I.

"He has been engaged in a duel."

"A duel! merciful God!" I exclaimed, sinking back in my chair.

"Be composed," cried Captain Garth, anxiously supporting me; "Montague as I have before told you is safe, I have left him in *perfect* safety. I assure you *upon my honour* that he is safe," reiterated he.

"Why then is he not here? Why does he not return?"

"He must not be seen coming hither," replied he; "even my being here is attended with danger. It is useless to deceive you: this affair may yet terminate seriously for Lord Maynooth, who was

the instigator of it ; and Montague, for the present is best out of the way."

I felt almost suffocated till tears came to my relief, and leaning on the breakfast table I covered my face with my handkerchief, and wept without control as Captain Garth related the circumstances of this unhappy affair.

It appeared that in consequence of Montague's speech in the House of Lords on the preceding day, some observations had fallen from him respecting circumstances which had occurred in the Irish rebellion of 1798 ; and that in elucidating what he had advanced, an allusion had been made to the conduct of a certain noble Lord at a later period, which in some involuntary instance had been considered as bearing towards personal reflection, in consequence of which Lord Maynooth, the son of the Nobleman alluded to, a young man of high spirit and impetuous disposition, had thought proper to demand a retraction of Lord Montague's assertion. Mon-

tague, fully aware of the misconception of this rash youth, readily explained away the most offensive part of the indignity; but fresh objections being started as to the explanation itself, and apologies demanded upon grounds that were inadmissible, Montague considered other concessions incompatible with his character as a soldier and a gentleman, and declining farther correspondence on the subject, a challenge had been given and consequently accepted between them. A meeting had taken place at Kensington, whither Montague was attended by his friend Captain Garth; and Lord Maynooth, as the offended party, had fired first and without effect: Montague instantly discharged his pistol in the air, having little inclination to risk the life of his young adversary; but Lord Maynooth, constitutionally irritable, and impressed with the belief of imaginary insult, still professed himself dissatisfied, and Montague disdaining any farther mediation the affair proceeded.

Montague was wounded in the arm by the second fire of his antagonist, and, writhing with pain, his own was given probably unsteadily; and unfortunately reaching Lord Maynooth, he fell instantly to the ground, bathed in blood, which flowed copiously from the wound. Little alive to fear upon his own account, Montague waited to see him in the care of his surgeon before he provided for his own safety, and a carriage being in readiness he was cautiously conveyed back to his father's house in town; but by this time the alarm of the duel was spreading rapidly round the neighbourhood, and, fearful lest any premature reports of it should reach Richmond, he dispatched Captain Garth to prepare me for the event, and procuring a hackney-coach he returned to London, and sent for Mr. H — to attend him at his hotel. While the life of this young man was in danger, and Captain Garth reluctantly acknowledged that his danger' was ex-

treme, Montague's safety appeared somewhat precarious; for, vindictive from previous resentment and added misfortune, it was not improbable, should any fatal consequences ensue, that his family might pursue the same intemperate conduct as had now plunged their only son into this unfortunate predicament; and for the present I learned that it was proper for all parties to be invisible. As soon as Captain Garth had informed me of all which he deemed expedient, he prepared to return to town, where Montague was anxiously awaiting his return, and whether I prayed in vain that he would permit me to accompany him. Captain Garth did not consider it prudent to be seen openly returning towards London himself, but procuring a boat to row him up to Chelsea, he took a hasty leave of me, and, embarking at the garden stairs, promised to bring Montague back to Richmond by a similar conveyance in the dusk of the evening. As soon as he was

gone I strove to calm myself sufficiently to break the intelligence to Mrs. Aylmer, without unnecessarily alarming her, but the task was far less difficult than I imagined: accustomed for years to live in military society, she was in some sort familiarized to the frequency of such rencontres, and perfectly well acquainted with all the minutiae of their arrangement. Montague's conduct in this particular instance met her warmest approbation; she applauded him for the magnanimity he had displayed throughout the affair, and descanted upon the subject without manifesting the least alarm. I listened to her with involuntary amazement. But Mrs. Aylmer was a heroine in action as well as in heart! Her youth, for she had been married to General Aylmer at a very early age, had been passed amidst the trying varieties of a military life. She had accompanied him during the whole of the American war; all the severities of which she had un-

hesitatingly shared with him. The perils of actual warfare, when opposed to what she believed her duty, she had heroically despised, and, firm in her determination of administering to his domestic comfort, she had personally braved the dangers from which her sex naturally shrunk, and, secure in the triumphant exertions of British valour, smiled undaunted even as the ordnance bellowed round her canvas dwelling! As she advanced in years she gloried in being considered as a mother by the regiment of which the General had the command. Abroad or at home, in sickness or in sorrow, it ever claimed the soothing comforts of her personal attention; and every suffering individual, from the veteran field officer to the “aspiring “young hero” of the rank and file muster roll, under circumstances of distress, experienced alike the alleviation of her cares. She was sorry, she said, that this affair had occurred just at this critical

period, because it would naturally turn the tide of observation upon me ; but it was upon that account principally that she regretted it. The young man deserved punishment for his impetuosity, and Montague's character was too highly established to be liable to misrepresentation. Lord Maynooth's danger she treated lightly. " These things are always much exaggerated," said she, pursuing her own thoughts, " this young boy may have received a trifling wound, but it has possibly been much magnified by alarm ; at all events it will give him a consequence in the world which he might never otherwise have attained." Too much agitated to listen calmly to such reflections, I soon left her to make some arrangement for my departure from Richmond ; for having ascertained that Montague's present safety depended upon his absence, I had previously determined at all risks to accompany him wherever he might go, and I now hastened to commence

my preparation for it. I directed Norris to put up every thing for a journey of some length ; and, this care removed from my mind, I waited with impatience for the promised hour of his return. Never did any day seem so long ! Incapable of fixing my thoughts to any occupation, I walked from room to room in restless uneasiness, and totally unable to content myself in the house, as soon as evening approached I wrapped myself in a large Indian shawl and wandered into the gardens. It was a fine clear evening, the moon rose with unusual brilliancy ; but though early in May it was nevertheless extremely cold. Regardless however of the keen chilling air, I still lingered in the gardens in momentary expectation of Montague's arrival. The candles were already lighted in the parlour, the bubbling tea urn steamed upon the table ; but harassed by a thousand nameless fears for the object of my solicitude, I drew my shawl closer round

me, and, almost freezing with cold, still paced the willow-walk in trembling anxiety. At length the gentle splashing of oars broke the stillness of the water; a boat approached the stairs, and as I hurried with a beating heart towards the spot, Montague and his friend leaped on shore. Alarmed at finding me alone in the gardens at such an hour, Montague, as he pressed me to his bosom, tenderly reproached me for exposing myself to the damps of the evening; but, delighted to again clasp him to my heart in safety, I thought little of personal inconvenience to myself, and, grateful that he was once more restored to me, I hurried them into the house, and busied myself in preparing the grateful beverage for my shivering friends. Montague threw off a loose wrapping-coat which he had worn during their chilling sail, and, tossing it carelessly on a chair, I discovered for the first time that his arm was in a sling. The tea-cup trembled in my hand, I became

pale as death ; but instantly perceiving the cause of my alarm, he smilingly loos- ed the silk handkerchief which sup- ported it, to dissipate my fears.

“ ’Tis of no consequence,” said he carelessly, “ it is a mere trifle, from which in a few days I shall experience no inconvenience, it is not worth a thought ; do not therefore alarm your- self, or embitter the few moments we have to pass together. All we have now time to think of, my Frances, is how *your* comfort in my absence may be best secured.”

“ For *my* comfort,” answered I de- cidedly, “ I have already provided ; I shall be wretched at a distance from you, and I am resolved to accompany you, go whithersoever you will. Do not deny me,” continued I earnestly, for he was eagerly interrupting me ; “ for upon this subject I am fixed, my resolution is firm, and nothing but your *commands* shall in- duce me to forego it.”

“ My authority then,” said he, folding me in his arm, “ shall never be exerted to render you unhappy, and though I regret that any circumstances should involve you in the inconveniences I am subject to, it is the proudest triumph of my life that you are desirous to share them with me ! You shall go then, my love,” added he ; “ your society will cheer my solitude ; *your* participation will render my banishment less painful.”

“ Carried *nemine contradicente*,” cried Captain Garth, hastily finishing his tea ; “ and since Lady Montague is so magnanimously bent upon going into exile with you, I think I shall change my plan of proceeding also. My lady mother will perhaps hear of this affair more expeditiously than I wish, and I dare swear with a delectable host of additions. I know that the good old soul will never be persuaded that I am safe till she has ocular demonstration of the fact ; so that I think, wisely taking all things into

consideration, that I shall give up my scheme of going with you, and get back to London again, time enough to jump into the mail for Northallerton. I wish however you would let me write a letter or two first, for I shall not I believe be early enough in town," added he, looking at his watch. Thus then it was settled, and while Captain Garth retired to write his letters, Montague drew his chair nearer the fire, and, resting his aching temples on my bosom, detailed more fully his plan for our departure. As soon as he had hurried over his letters Captain Garth rang for his groom, and warmly shaking hands with both of us, and desiring Montague to write to him at his brother's seat near Northallerton, he mounted his horse and galloped back to town. As soon as he was gone, Montague went up to Mrs. Aylmer's dressing-room to take leave of her before she retired to rest, and, finely as she had talked it in the morning, she now appeared quite sub-

duced by the necessity of this speedy parting. Next to the General, she had loved Montague beyond every other earthly being, and she shed torrents of tears as, affectionately embracing her, he pronounced his farewell, and went down to the stable-yard to give orders for our departure. With the earliest dawn of morning we commenced our journey, Montague for obvious reasons choosing to take no servants but Norris and a confidential one of his own, and travelling with hired horses, under the assumed name of Colonel Elliott, he took the road towards the north.

END OF VOL. I.





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